

BIG BOOK

of
Halloween Entertainments



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BIG BOOK OF
HALLOWEEN ENTERTAINMENTS

B I G B O O K
O F H A L L O W E E N
E N T E R T A I N M E N T S

A Collection of Original Plays, Poems
and Novelties Written Especially for
This Book

B E C K L E Y - C A R D Y C O M P A N Y
C H I C A G O

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FOREWORD

THE PLAYS, POEMS, AND NOVELTIES included in this volume are here published for the first time. They offer a selection of material which will meet the needs of the teacher or program director seeking a balanced Halloween program with the expenditure of a minimum of time and effort.

The plays are varied in type, in length, and in number of characters. The poems represent all shades of Halloween sentiment. The novelties consist of dramatic sketches, simple exercises, dances, and drills.

There are selections suitable for all ages from little tots to young people. Among these selections will be found numbers appropriate not only for school entertainments, but also for church programs, club meetings, and other community gatherings.

The occasional musical selections suggested for use with some of the plays and novelties may be found in collections of songs commonly used for group singing.

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P L A Y S



THE ENCHANTED GINGER JAR

TIME OF PLAYING: *About thirty-five minutes*

CHARACTERS

JACK PUNKIN-HEAD, *a tall boy*

SCARECROW

BROWNIE, *a small boy*

MADGE, *a fairy*

NADINE, *a witch*

FRED and ALAN, *ghosts*

SOUND ARTISTS, *representing the cats,*
any number

COSTUMES

JACK PUNKIN-HEAD: *Long, very close-fitting green trousers, a tightly-buttoned green coat with long sleeves, and a floppy, cut-in collar to suggest the leaves of the pumpkin vine. His hair should be red, his eyebrows deep orange, with perhaps some clown lines in green on his cheeks. He should carry a pumpkin jack-o'-lantern.*

SCARECROW: *Old articles of man's clothing. Hat, large and battered. Face painted in clown style. His walk should be loose-jointed and floppy.*

BROWNIE: *Brown cambric pajamas, brown leather belt. Pointed brown cap; dark glasses. Eye shadow may be used instead of glasses. He must be able to play several lively tunes on the mouth organ.*

MADGE: *Dressed as a fairy for the house party. Wears a thin summer dress; wings if possible. Narrow crown with star, above her flying hair.*

NADINE: *Dressed as a witch. Wears a black cape; a pointed black hat; flying hair; carries a small broom.*

FRED and ALAN: *Wrapped in sheets. They may wear false faces, if not too hideous.*

SOUND ARTISTS: *Ordinary apparel.*

TWO CATS: *Silhouettes cut from wood or heavy cardboard, painted black, and fastened to short poles.*

TIME: *Halloween night.*

SCENE: *At right stage, several tent-like shocks of corn with pumpkins lying among them. One of these shocks must be built around a small stand or table, to be brought forward for a particular use in the latter part of the play. At left stage, the large enchanted ginger jar in its camouflage of cornstalks. At back stage, a screen painted to represent a section of rough board fence; this stands out from the back wall far enough to give concealment to the boys who manipulate the cats. On the board or wall behind, and just*

above the top of the fence, is a large, round, orange-colored moon, which forms the background for the cat serenade and fight.

The ginger jar is made by painting a barrel green to resemble a real ginger jar. The raffia casing is represented by a large, diamond-shaped line design in yellow paint. It should have a braced piece of board nailed inside, or a small stool, to serve as a seat for BROWNIE while he waits for his time to appear, also as a step to aid him in going over the top. This barrel stands behind corn shocks which may be pulled down at the proper time, by means of attached ropes operated by someone off stage. The music from the big house, lively dance tunes played on either accordion or harmonica, may be furnished by someone off stage, or it may be played by BROWNIE, from his hiding place in the barrel.

As the curtains open, dance music sounds faintly and briefly. Enter from opposite directions JACK PUNKIN-HEAD and SCARECROW. They meet at center stage.

SCARECROW [*touching his hat in salutation*]. Hello, Jack Punkin-head. What are you doing, rambling around after dark? I had a feeling I might meet you if I walked across. Something tonight makes me feel queer and un-

easy. Does it you too? Shaky all over. [*Stops with his head on one side, looking at JACK.*] Know what I mean? Something that isn't just right.

JACK [*balancing his jack-o'-lantern on the palm of one hand*]. Oh, it's the music up at the big house makes you feel that way. They're putting on a dance up there. High jinks, with all the people in the country coming, and everybody dressed like somebody else.

SCARECROW. A dance? What is a dance?

JACK. Well—a jiggling around, something like what you do yourself when the wind blows hard.

SCARECROW. Like this, you mean? [*He begins a weird, swaying dance; the music is heard again, very gay, and growing louder.*]

JACK. There it is. They are tuning up their fiddles now. What's the matter with our having a little fun ourselves? Here, wait till I find a safe place for this headpiece of mine. [*He sets the jack-o'-lantern carefully beside some cornstalks, and returns to center stage. The music is in full swing, and JACK and SCARECROW leap into a wild, sweeping dance. They charge from one end of the stage to the other, separate, and dance solo for a time, JACK specializing in high steps, knee action, and twirling, SCARECROW doing a shuffling, sliding sort of dance. Then they come together and collapse in the middle of the cornfield.*]

JACK [*rising, stretching his arms, working his fingers*]. Golly meringue. You got me down that time. Wonder if I'm hurt, or just shaken. [*He tries his knee joints, ankle joints, wrists, and neck.*] No, all right. I seem to be all right. [*Looks down at SCARECROW.*] What are you lying there for? You're not going to pretend that I hurt you! Here, give me your hand! Up with you, now, for a noble fellow! Ha, ha! Funny spill that we had, wasn't it? [*He lifts SCARECROW to his feet; SCARECROW, leaning against JACK, draws a great sigh.*]

SCARECROW. It may seem funny to you, but it's a catastrophe to me to be brought so low.

JACK. Cats, did you say? Yes, I often hear cats singing about at night; but I haven't heard any tonight.

SCARECROW. Who said cats? Not I. I said it was a catastrophe to me to be brought so low. Not for you, perhaps. You're used to lying on the ground. But think of me! Day and night, all summer long, I have held the same exalted position, always above everyone else, always erect and looking abroad over the country. I wouldn't exchange my lot for that of any king! Why, I *am* a king. I am king of the Cloverdale cornfields.

JACK. All right, Kingy, if you feel that way about it. I'll not dispute your word. But what about the crows?

SCARECROW. The crows do bother me a lot. Still, if I didn't have 'em, I wouldn't be king of the cornfield,

would I? So there is good even in crows. Still it is amazing how much those creatures can eat.

JACK. Eat, did you say? That's probably what the folks up at the big house are doing right now. When they get tired of dancing, they eat; and when they get tired of eating, they dance. A merry life, isn't it?

SCARECROW. What do they eat up at the big house? Corn?

JACK. Crows, for all I know. No, I don't think they do eat crows either; they seem to hate crows so. I'll tell you what the boys said this morning, when they came to pick out pumpkins for their lanterns. Fred, the boy that lives up there said, "Say, Al, you ought to see the good things that Mom has stacked up in the pantry! Nuff to feed us for a month, but I 'spose the party will eat it all in one night. The other boy said, "But not before we cinch our share, hey, Fred?" And then they talked about cakes and pies, and cookies and doughnuts, and all such truck.

SCARECROW. I heard them talking once, too, last summer when the corn was green. They had what they called a cache, in one corner of my cornfield.

JACK. Money, do you mean?

SCARECROW. No, it was a tin box with food in it. They had it hidden in a hole near the fence corner. And every day those two boys would come and sit on the ground, and eat, and eat, and eat. Hungrier than crows,

if you ask me. And then one day they brought out a little stone jar and buried it beside the tin box. The jar had preserved ginger in it, I heard them say. That was toward the end of summer, and they didn't come out much after that. I shouldn't wonder if the jar were still there.

JACK [*with a look of disgust*]. Ginger! I don't like the sound of it!

SCARECROW. Why not? They seemed to think it was fine.

JACK. It makes me think of pies. Did you know that most of my family have been hashed up and put into pies?

SCARECROW. Oh, ho! And *have* they now? No wonder you are touchy about them. And do they use ginger in pies?

JACK. I'm sure they do.

SCARECROW. Well, they'll not use any of *this* in pies. If there's any left, it belongs to us. B'lieve I'll go and see if the jar's still there. I'd just like to taste something for once. Do you know? I've never had a taste of food in all my life. [*Exit SCARECROW.*]

JACK. Well, knock me for a row of field mice! Never had a bite of anything in all his life! It must have been tough to stand and watch those crows eat, all summer long, and never get a bite of anything for himself. But here he comes already. Guess he found the jar.

[*Enter SCARECROW carrying a real ginger jar.*]

SCARECROW. Well, here it is. And more than half full.

[*Takes off the lid.*] And it smells good. Have a bit?

JACK [*nervously*]. No, thank you. At least, not now.

[*The light laugh of a little girl is heard.*] Hey, put it down! I hear someone coming.

SCARECROW. Someone from the house, I'll bet. Well, they'll not find this. I'll hide behind the corn until they're gone.

[*He hides the jar, and then slips out of sight himself;*

JACK *also hides.* Enter MADGE and NADINE.]

NADINE. Tell me, Madge—I think you ought to—why did you insist on coming out to this lonely cornfield, on this night of all nights?

MADGE. Because Uncle Bob dared me to. And besides, he promised that if I would come out to the field myself, and get him a really good-looking pumpkin, he would make me a jack-o'-lantern. And Uncle Bob's jack-o'-lanterns are the finest in all the world. He'll make you one, too, if I ask him to.

NADINE. I'd like the lantern, of course, but it is so sort of strange out here. Aren't you afraid of ghosts and hobgoblins—and—witches?

MADGE. On my own farm? I hope not.

NADINE. Look how big the moon is! And round. And red. I never saw it so bright before.

MADGE. It goes beautifully with your witch costume. Moons and witches, you know, and broomsticks and black cats. There ought to be some black cats about. We have plenty of them, but I don't hear any yet.

[At this moment the opening notes of the cat serenade are heard, long-drawn and mournful, a full minute before the silhouettes are hoisted above the top of the fence. The two girls standing a little to the left of center stage, and facing the moon, are startled at first, clutch hold of each other, and stand in tense attitude until the cats appear, when they burst into smothered laughter. MADGE claps her hands softly and twirls on her toes; then the two girls take hands and stand facing the moon till the serenade changes to a fight. The cats finally disappear behind the fence.]

MADGE. Wasn't it *funny*? Wasn't it just perfect? I wouldn't have missed it for a thousand dollars!

NADINE [*gayly*]. I didn't know you had devil-cats on your farm, Madge. Why didn't you tell me?

MADGE [*pretending to be indignant*]. They're not devil-cats! At least if they are, they belong to you. Yes, that's it! They're witch-cats, so they do belong to you.

NADINE. That's a fine way—to shift your responsibilities onto me! But hadn't we better be hunting our pumpkins?

MADGE. Yes, we had. We don't want to be away from the house too long. Come along. I see some good-looking pumpkins over there by that corn shock.

[They start toward the corn, but hear a noise at right.]

NADINE *[clutching MADGE by the arm, and pointing]*. Madge! Look! What's that?

[Enter, right, FRED and ALAN, robed in sheets; they move slowly toward the girls, waving their arms and making the most doleful moans and groans. As they come nearer, they speak in hollow tones.]

FRED. O-o-oh! Unhappy spirit that I am! Why did I come back to this cold earth, where none remains to remember, or to love me?

ALAN. O-o-oh! Wretched spirit that I am! Why did I return to this cold world—

[The two girls run from the stage at top speed, screaming until out of sight. The boys throw back the sheets from their faces, take one look at each other, and double up with laughter.]

FRED. Well, I never dreamed that the girls would fall for it like that. Of course we knew that Nadine was an easy mark. But Madge—ho, Madge! Madge wasn't afraid!

ALAN. Oh no, Madge wasn't afraid! But I noticed that she screamed as loudly as Nadine. And ran as fast, too.

Wonder what we'll hear when we get back to the house.

FRED. I can tell you one thing,—we'd better keep out of Uncle Bob's way for a while. Madge is Uncle Bob's particular pet.

ALAN. What would he do to us?

FRED. Oh, take a stick to us, or a whip. Or anything he could get his hands on. He might even use his old razor strop, and that's no joke, I can tell you.

ALAN [*complainingly*]. I don't see why he'd want to beat us just for that. We didn't hurt anyone. We were only playing a joke.

[SCARECROW, *still out of sight, breaks into a high cackling laugh.*]

SCARECROW. Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha! A joke! A joke! Ah-ha-ha-ha! Oh, *what* a joke!

[*At the first sound, the boys start violently and, tangled in their sheets, fall flat to the ground. They have hard work getting to their feet, but manage it finally, and stand looking nervously about, their sheets drawn tightly about their legs.*]

FRED [*angrily, deciding that he has been fooled*]. You tripped me, Al. You did! What made you?

ALAN. I did not!

FRED. Well, who did then? Did you hear someone laugh?

ALAN. I heard someone say, "A joke, a joke." Who do you s'pose it was?

FRED. Great Governor! How should I know? Some of the fellows from the house, I guess. Came to scare us.

ALAN. Well, they scared us, all right. What do you say we go on back?

FRED. I'm ready if you are. And Alan, just—just stay with me, and you'll be all right.

SCARECROW [*breaking out again*]. Oh, such a joke,—ah-ha-ha-ha-ha! Oh, such a joke! [*He begins to caw like a crow, very noisily.*] Caw, caw, caw, caw!

[*ALAN stops for an instant, and then suddenly breaks away. Exit, running.*]

FRED. Alan! Alan! You bum! I told you to stay with me.

[*FRED starts to run, gets tangled in his sheet, falls, picks himself up and falls again. Finally he manages to stumble off the stage to the accompaniment of SCARECROW's mocking laughter.*]

SCARECROW [*coming out of hiding*]. Ha-ha-ha! I haven't had so much fun in a crow's age. Jack Punkin-head, come out of your hole and tell me what you think of your young friends now. *Some boys, aren't they?* Caw! Caw! Caw!

JACK [*coming out*]. You seem to be having a pretty good time with yourself tonight, Kingy.

SCARECROW. Oh, cut the Kingy! I'm *happy*, I tell you.

This world's a pretty decent place to live in after all.

JACK. Just the same, you may be laughing out of the other side of your mouth before the evening's over. I know more about Halloween than you do.

SCARECROW. Tut, tut, my boy! Don't set out to make *me* nervous. Because, you know, it can't be done. What is there to be afraid of, anyhow?

JACK. Well, I'm only telling you what I've heard. But they do say that on Halloween the country is full of ghosts and fairies, witches and goblins.

SCARECROW [*loudly*]. I don't believe it. I don't believe a word of it. And now, before you get yourself scared up by talking about them, what do you say to another look at the jar?

[SCARECROW *approaches the corn shock, which at once falls to the ground, revealing the big enchanted jar.*]

SCARECROW [*stopping short, with both hands in the air*]. Hully, Gully! Hucka-bucka-beemster! Well, what do you know about that? Jacky, [*looking back over his shoulder*] our jar seems to have grown a little. Is it the same one, do you think? Or are your witch friends playing a joke on us?

JACK [*frightened*]. How do I know? I told you we ought to be careful. Go away, jar! [*Speaks violently.*] Go away, or I'll kick you away! Go away, I say!

SCARECROW. Tut, tut, boy! Now don't get excited. I'll attend to this little business. If you say take her away, away she goes. I'll turn her over on her side, and roll her into the creek. And that'll be another joke, caw, caw!

[*He lays a hand on the enchanted jar, but starts back when strains of music issue from it.*]

JACK. Golly meringue! First the music comes from the big house, and next it comes from the jar! [JACK, *shaking with fear, retreats to center stage.*]

SCARECROW. Not scared, are you, Jacky?

JACK. I do not know, I cannot tell,

But I don't like music shut up in a shell.

SCARECROW. No more do I. But the question is now, what shall we do about it. Well, I should worry! [*Rolls up his sleeves.*] Am I not in the scaring business myself? [*He advances on the enchanted jar, calling in a loud voice.*] Come out of there, whoever you are! Come out like a man, and show yourself!

BROWNIE [*speaking from the jar, in a shrill, excited voice*]. So you don't believe in us! So you're not afraid of us! I'll show you! I'll show you!

[The lid falls off the jar with a clatter, and BROWNIE climbs out. SCARECROW, astonished, backs to where JACK PUNKIN-HEAD stands. BROWNIE begins marching back and forth in front of the two, playing furiously upon his mouth organ. When he has passed them twice, after marching the length of the stage, he stops in front of them, hands on hips, with his back to the audience, and shouts shrilly at them.]

BROWNIE. Do you believe in me now? Are you afraid of me now?

SCARECROW *[grinning]*. I believe in you, because I see you. I also see that you have a very bad temper for such a little nubbin. But as to being afraid of you—no, little fellow, no!

BROWNIE *[furiously]*. I'll make you afraid of me. I'll make you afraid! I'll stick pins in your stomach!

SCARECROW. Stick away, little nubbin. It won't hurt me a bit.

BROWNIE. I'll pull straws out of you then!

SCARECROW. Better be gettin' at it. It'll take you some time to pull out all the straws I'm made of.

BROWNIE. I'll trip you up and make you fall!

SCARECROW *[looking at JACK with a laugh]*. Nobody but Jack Punkin-head, here, can make me fall.

BROWNIE. I'll—I'll steal your hat!

SCARECROW. Give you leave to try, pal. You'll have a hard time of it, though. My hat is fastened on.

BROWNIE. I'll send an army of field mice and crickets to eat you up!

SCARECROW. Field mice play around me every day of the world, and the crickets love me better than a brother.

BROWNIE. Well, I'll cut the buttons off your coat! Every one of them! Every one of them!

SCARECROW [*angrily*]. You just try *that*, you little nubbin, and I'll squeeze you into a last year's bird nest! [*As he says this, he stretches out his arms toward BROWNIE and makes large, squeezing motions with his fingers.*]

BROWNIE [*clenching his fists and shaking them shoulder-high, his voice sounding as if he were about to cry*]. Well, what *can* I do? I've got to make you afraid somehow!

SCARECROW [*grinning again*]. Give it up, sonny. You can't scare me. I'm the King of the Scarers myself. So why shouldn't we all be friends? What do you say, Jack Punkin-head? Shall we all be friends?

JACK. Why you're already my friend, and I'm yours. So if Brownie wants to be friends with us both, all he has to do is to give us some more of his music. For, 'tis often said, music heals many a hurt.

SCARECROW. Well spoken, Jack. And that gives me an idea. We'll have that party we were talking about,

early in the evening. We'll not need food for *our* party. The fine smell of the corn, and the fragrance of the pumpkins will be our food. And the frosty air, washed down with moonlight, will be our drink. And Nubbin, here, will furnish the music. And so, with that headpiece of yours, friend Jack, for a nearer light, we'll be ready for our party.

JACK. That suits me to a T. I'll bring the light.

SCARECROW. And you and I, Nubbin, will bring the enchanted jar, and put it to a new use.

[JACK brings the cornstalk table, placing it near center of stage, with the jack-o'-lantern on it. SCARECROW, with the help of BROWNIE, brings the barrel, either carrying it, or rolling it to center stage, where they turn it upside down. SCARECROW holds a hand for BROWNIE to use as a step in mounting his throne. BROWNIE sits on the barrel, feet crossed, while he plays as many lively tunes as the time allows. SCARECROW and JACK may each do a solo dance, circling the small musician; SCARECROW keeps his dance in his former swaying, shuffling, sliding style. JACK dances with much more dash; BROWNIE, if it is safe, may do a short jig on the barrel head. As a grand finale, BROWNIE, sitting again, may play the tune of "The Man on the Flying Trapeze" while JACK and

SCARECROW *sing, loudly and merrily, the following words:]*

Oh, happy the Halloween, lucky the night,
When friends get together in the merry moonlight!
With singing and dancing, with jests quick and light,
We'll while the glad hours away.

Call the fairies, the goblins, the ghosts, if you please.
Let the witches do flying stunts high o'er the trees;
Let the skeletons ramble with chattering knees.
We'll laugh them and chaff them awa-a-ay!

Oh, happy the Halloween, lucky the night,
When friends get together in the merry moonlight!
With singing and dancing, with jests quick and light,
We'll while the glad hours away.

CURTAIN

GETTING READY FOR WINTER

TIME OF PLAYING: *About fifteen minutes*

CHARACTERS

MOTHER NATURE

EIGHT WOODLAND NYMPHS

BIRDS, ANIMALS, INSECTS

COSTUMES

MOTHER NATURE: *Brown cheesecloth robe, trimmed with autumn colors. Long yellow cape lined with red. Crown of leaves. Carries wand with colored streamers.*

WOODLAND NYMPHS: *Green cheesecloth gowns. Leg-horn hats prettily trimmed.*

ANIMALS: *Children's sleeping garments made of cambric material; colors suitable to creatures.*

INSECTS: BEE, *black and yellow coat with long "cut-away" tails. Black bloomers. Gauze wings on wire. Black skullcap.* KATYDID, *green coat and bloomers.*

LADYBUG, *black skirt with red dots, black blouse, cap.*

BIRDS: *Short dresses of crepe paper, as elaborate as desired.*

SCENE: *An out-of-door place, represented by sprays of autumn leaves, which provide places for animals to*

hide. At back, center, a throne decorated with autumn leaves and flowers.

As the curtains open, WOOD NYMPHS are decorating the throne.

FIRST NYMPH. We must prepare for Mother Nature's ceremony of getting ready for winter.

NEW NYMPH. I am such a new nymph that I do not know what to do.

FIRST NYMPH. We'll all show you.

SECOND NYMPH. Mother Nature will soon be here.

THIRD NYMPH. She is going to give orders for the winter to all her creatures.

NEW NYMPH. What does she do that for?

FIRST NYMPH. Their life in the winter in this region differs from that of the summer.

SECOND NYMPH. Their habits are changed.

THIRD NYMPH. How pretty the autumn is!

FOURTH NYMPH. These leaves are beautiful!

FIFTH NYMPH. So are the flowers.

[They sit on the steps of the throne and sing to the tune of "Sing a Song of Sixpence."]

We'll sing a song of autumn
With colors bright and gay,
In woods and swamps and pastures
In beautiful array.

We'll sing a song of autumn
In Mother Nature's Room,
Where everything is colorful
With flowers all in bloom.

FIRST NYMPH. There comes Mother Nature.

SECOND NYMPH. Come. We must greet her. [*They kneel in a set figure.*]

MOTHER NATURE [*waving wand and smiling*]. Where is my New Nymph? We have much to show her. [*Puts her arm around NEW NYMPH.*] My great outdoor room is full of beauty. My autumn artist is painting a canvas of many colors. [*Sits on throne.*] Now call my hibernating animals.

[*NYMPHS hunt for them. Enter from different directions BEAR, SKUNK, BAT, CHIPMUNK, WOODCHUCK, RACCOON.*]

MOTHER NATURE.

Come here, my little sleepyheads,
'Tis time to say, "Goodnight;"
Find your dens and burrows
And creep in out of sight.
Snuggle down all cozy
And take your winter's nap;
I'll see you in the Springtime
When my trees are full of sap.

NEW NYMPH. But, Mother Nature, what will keep them alive all winter?

MOTHER NATURE. Plenty of food has made my creatures strong and fat. This fat is just like coal on a furnace fire. It will keep their bodies warm all winter. [*Animals hide in different places.*]

MOTHER NATURE. Now call my birds.

[*NYMPH blows whistle. BIRDS enter from all directions and fly to throne.*]

MOTHER NATURE. It is time for some of you to fly south. All insect-eaters must start soon. Most of the seed-eaters will remain. Juncos and tree sparrows will fly only a short distance south. Arctic terns and golden plovers will travel thousands of miles. Swallows, you must start tomorrow. Bobolinks, go immediately. [*Exit BOBOLINKS.*] Small birds will travel by night, large birds by day. Now gather your bands together and prepare for your long journey. Remember! Return in the spring!

[*NYMPHS form a circle. BIRDS play the game, "Go in and out the window." NYMPHS sing these words: "Go in and out the woodland" (first verse); "Go round and round the woodland" (second verse); "Kneel down and rest a moment" (third verse). Then NYMPHS separate, raise hands, in groups of two for a gate, and repeat song and actions. BIRDS fly to places assigned on stage.*]

[*NYMPHS move around as if looking for something. One NYMPH blows a whistle. Enter two FROGS that hop to throne. MOTHER NATURE touches them with her wand. They turn and go to front of stage.*]

[*FROGS stand side by side. One speaks the first line of his poem; then the other speaks the first line of his. They speak alternately, a line at a time, until they finish the poems.*]

A.

I am a frog.
We're going to our mud-pie beds,
Suspended animation
Down below the freezing point,
But when warm weather comes again,
We're livelier than ever;

B.

So am I.
But none of us will die.
Is what it is, you know.
We breathe there very slow.
We crawl up out of bed.
Not one of us is dead!

[*They hop to position on stage.*]

[NYMPH whistles. Enter LADYBUG with a short flight to throne.]

NEW NYMPH.

Ladybug, Ladybug, fly away home!

Your house is on fire, and your children will burn!

LADYBUG. I have work to do. I cannot fly home yet. I must keep eating the plant lice from rosebushes and other plants. I must work in the cornfields, too.

MOTHER NATURE. Ladybug, when you finish your work this autumn, you are to crawl down to the foot of a rosebush and rest. Snow and ice will freeze you, but you will not die. In the springtime I'll waken you.

[LADYBUG hops to position on stage.]

[NYMPH whistles. Enter BEE, buzzing around on way to throne.]

NEW NYMPH.

Fiddle-dee-dee, Fiddle-dee-dee,

The fly shall marry the bumblebee.

BEE. I'm not a bumblebee. I'm a hive bee. I suck sweet juices from flowers. I make honey and store it in the hive. Buzz! Buzz!

MOTHER NATURE. Honeybee, this winter you and your mates are to make a warm overcoat by lapping your bodies over each other. In the center will be your Queen

Bee. No cold air must reach her. The warmth of your many bodies will keep her warm, and when spring comes she will be ready to work. My queen bees must lay two thousand eggs a day. [BEE *hops to position.*]

[NYMPH *whistles. Enter two KATYDIDS from opposite directions. They meet and say, "Katydid, Katydidn't," then go to throne. They hop to center front of stage and argue, "Katydid, Katydidn't" as long as desired. Turn backs and say, "She did, she didn't." Hop to position on stage, arguing all the way.*]

[NYMPH *whistles. Other INSECTS enter, and go to throne.*]

MOTHER NATURE. Are you all ready for your winter orders? [All *reply in appropriate noises, BEE and KATYDIDS also.*] Are your eggs all laid? [Reply.] Then you may go where you like, but keep your autumn serenades a while longer. Some of you will live over the winter, but all who die will have left millions of eggs, so next year there will be plenty of insects. [They *hop off to positions.*]

[MOTHER NATURE *beckons to NEW NYMPH. She sits on throne steps. Other NYMPHS draw near. MOTHER NATURE stands.*]

MOTHER NATURE. You see, my New Nymph, what the

ceremony of getting ready for winter really is. All my creatures are needed in my great outdoor room, and they must be cared for. I could not get along without my animals, my birds, and my insects. I could not get along without my flowers and my trees. My Woodland Nymphs will soon change their gowns to white. And so, my faithful workers, go your different ways for the winter. Next spring we shall begin work again. Pleasant journeys to you all! Pleasant dreams!

[TABLEAU—*Autumn song sung by ALL on stage.*]

CURTAIN

THE HALLOWEEN GHOST

TIME OF PLAYING: *About twenty-five minutes*

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM GRAY, *the boy who is having the Halloween party*

AUSTIN GRAY, *William's younger brother, the ghost*

NORTON ROBERTS, *the boy who can always explain everything*

JAMES ROBERTS, *the boy who is very skeptical*

JOHN METCALF, *willing to try anything the first time*

DOROTHY KANE, *believes the barn is haunted*

NATALIE KANE, *also believes the barn is haunted*

ANNA METCALF, *not afraid of anything*

FRANCES FROMM, *always making suggestions*

PENELOPE DWIGHT, *always asking questions*

COSTUMES

All members of the cast wear children's ordinary apparel, except the GHOST, who wears a sheet.

SCENE: *The barn of the Gray homestead. Stacks of cornstalks stand about the barn. Here and there are the yellow faces of pumpkins. Flickering lanterns hang along the wall, making the place look dim and dusky. In the middle of the floor is a tub half-filled with wa-*

ter in which float several apples. A mirror hangs on the back center wall.

The curtain rises upon an empty stage. Presently the GHOST slips in by left center entrance. Glances furtively about him and then hides behind one of the large stacks of cornstalks. Presently WILLIAM enters, followed by the other children.

WILLIAM [*in a jovial tone*]. I hope everyone will have a good time at my party.

NATALIE. We ought to—with all the things you've planned.

PENELOPE. Do you like Halloween?

NORTON. Of course.

DOROTHY. William, did you ever hear your barn was haunted?

WILLIAM [*indignantly*]. Whoever said that?

DOROTHY. Our cook told us so this afternoon, when I told her you were going to have a party in your barn.

ANNA. Haunted by what?

DOROTHY. A horse-thief ghost. He comes every Halloween.

WILLIAM. That's nonsense! My father wouldn't own a haunted barn. [*Looks at the tub.*] Come on. I think we'd better get started. Let's duck for the apples first.

JOHN. You go first, William.

WILLIAM. All right. [*Gets down on his hands and knees before the tub of water.*] I'll begin. [*Opens his mouth wide.*]

GHOST [*in a deep voice*]. Beware!

WILLIAM [*leaping to his feet and glaring at the others*]. Who said that?

NATALIE. Don't look at me like that, William. I didn't say it.

DOROTHY. Nor I.

PENELOPE. I didn't.

NORTON. Nor I!

JAMES. Nor I!

WILLIAM. Did you, Anna?

ANNA [*indignantly*]. Of course not!

WILLIAM. That's very queer. I'll try it again. [*Gets down again on his hands and knees and opens his mouth.*]

GHOST [*in a deep voice*]. Stop!

WILLIAM [*leaping to his feet the second time*]. Who said that?

[*ALL silently shake their heads.*]

NORTON. It was probably the limb of a tree bumping against the barn.

DOROTHY [*shuddering*]. I tell you, our cook says this barn is haunted!

ANNA [*bravely*]. Well, who's afraid?

WILLIAM. I tell you, that's perfectly ridiculous! This barn is *not* haunted! I won't *have* it haunted! Someone else try this time.

NORTON. I will. [*Gets down on his hands and knees and opens his mouth.*]

GHOST. Halt!

NORTON [*jumping to his feet*]. You said that, William Gray! You've been saying these things all along and blaming them on us.

WILLIAM [*amazed*]. I? Why, I did not!

NATALIE [*glancing furtively about the room*]. All this is very odd!

NORTON. Maybe a board creaked.

JAMES. I never heard a board creak like that.

WILLIAM [*hastily*]. Let's do something else. Maybe we'll bob for apples later.

PENELOPE. What shall we do?

WILLIAM. We'll have our fortunes told by the mirror.

PENELOPE. What do you mean?

WILLIAM. It's this way. Each one of us will look into the mirror and see our future mate in it. Only *one* person is allowed in the room at a time. You have to say the rhyme—the one we learned last year. [*Hastily*] I shan't go first this time.

PENELOPE [*looking about the group*]. Who will?

JOHN. I don't want to.

NATALIE. Nor I.

DOROTHY. Nor I.

WILLIAM. Someone has to go first.

ANNA. I will.

WILLIAM. Very well. We'll go out and leave you alone.

[ALL go out left center exit and leave ANNA alone. ANNA gazes a little wistfully after them. Then she slowly walks up to the mirror and, staring steadily into it, repeats the following lines:]

I approach the magic glass
To consult my fate.
I implore most earnestly
To see my future mate.

[GHOST glides out from behind the pile of cornstalks and gazes steadily over ANNA's shoulder into the mirror.]

ANNA [shrieking at the top of her lungs]. Oh—oh—oh!

[All the children come running in pell-mell by left center entrance.]

WILLIAM. What is the matter?

DOROTHY. Why, Anna—you're always so calm!

ANNA [gasping]. A ghost looked over my shoulder!

DOROTHY. I told you this barn was haunted!

NORTON. It must have been a shadow!

DOROTHY. You don't have to tell me—

WILLIAM [*very indignantly*]. I tell you, this barn is *not* haunted! It's the reflection of those cornstalks in the mirror! [*Pulls the cornstalks back away from the mirror.*]

Now you can try again, and we'll all get out.

ANNA. I won't try again! Someone else can, but not I!

JOHN [*after a pause*]. I will.

WILLIAM. Now, John, remember, there's nothing to make you nervous. What Anna saw was only the reflection of the cornstalks in the mirror.

JOHN [*with great confidence*]. Oh, of course. [*The children go out, leaving JOHN alone. JOHN slowly approaches the mirror and repeats the rhyme.*] "I approach the magic glass—

GHOST [*in a loud voice*]. So do I! [*Slips out from behind the pile of cornstalks and stares into the mirror over JOHN's shoulder.*]

JOHN [*calling lustily*]. Help! Help! Help!

[*GHOST disappears. The children come flocking in.*]

JAMES. John—did you *see* anything?

JOHN [*shaking*]. See? I should say I did! I saw and I heard!

DOROTHY. I told you this barn was haunted!

WILLIAM. It is not!

NORTON. I guess what you heard was the squeaking of a mouse!

JOHN [*indignantly*]. I never heard a mouse like that!

FRANCES [*hastily*]. Let's do something else.

PENELOPE [*at a loss*]. What shall it be?

FRANCES. Ten fingers. We can all be in the room together then.

PENELOPE. How do you play it?

FRANCES. We all sit down in a ring on the floor. [*They all do so.*] And put an apple in the middle—

WILLIAM. I'll get the apple. [*Walks over to the tub and picks out an apple.*] Here it is. [*Places the apple in the middle of the ring.*] There! [*Sits down again.*]

FRANCES. Now you all close your eyes. [*ALL do so.*]

Now you grab for the apple—first count to ten. Ready?

ALL. Yes!

[*ALL close their eyes. Before they begin to count, GHOST slips out from behind the pile of cornstalks, creeps up to the circle, and snatches the apple. Then he goes back to his hiding place.*]

ALL [*counting*]. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten! [*ALL grab for the apple. Then they open their eyes. Of course, the apple is not there.*]

WILLIAM [*looking about him*]. Who has the apple?

ANNA. I haven't!

PENELOPE. Nor I!

JAMES. Nor I!

[*ALL show their empty hands.*]

WILLIAM [*much excited*]. Someone's hiding that apple!

FRANCES. I'm not!

NORTON. Neither am I!

DOROTHY. Nor I!

NATALIE. I'm not the guilty one.

WILLIAM. Then it must have rolled away somewhere.
We'll look for it.

[*As they are looking about the barn for the apple, GHOST comes out and quickly puts the apple down on the floor, then goes back.*]

WILLIAM. I don't see where that apple can be! [*Turns and catches sight of the apple on the floor.*] There it is!
[*They gather about him as he picks the apple up from the floor.*] Someone was hiding it!

DOROTHY. I tell you, no one hid it. This old barn is haunted!

WILLIAM. And I tell you, I won't have it haunted!

NORTON. Maybe the apple just naturally rolled away!

JAMES. Humph! That's very queer!

WILLIAM. Well, we'll try the game again. Everyone sit down on the floor. [*ALL sit.*] Now— [*Puts the apple in the middle of the ring.*] We'll close our eyes and count.

[*They close their eyes and begin to count again.*]

GHOST *glides out from behind the pile of cornstalks and hits WILLIAM a sounding whack over the head with one of the stalks.*]

WILLIAM [*leaping to his feet*]. Who did that?

ALL [*opening their eyes*]. What?

WILLIAM [*ruefully rubbing his head*]. Hit me on the head.

NORTON. You imagined that! As if anybody here would hit you on the head!

WILLIAM [*indignantly*]. I imagined it? Who did it?
[*Glares at the others.*] Who hit me on the head?

ANNA. I didn't.

FRANCES. Neither did I!

PENELOPE. Nor I!

JAMES. No one did!

WILLIAM. I never had a Halloween party like this one!

NATALIE [*shuddering*]. Queer things happen on Halloween!

DOROTHY. This barn—

WILLIAM [*almost shouting*]. I tell you, this barn is *not* haunted!

PENELOPE. Can't we do something else?

FRANCES. Yes. Why not have something to eat? We haven't eaten anything yet.

WILLIAM. Oh, of course. The candy. [*Walks over to the basket of candy that stands in one corner of the*

barn. *The candy is in boxes.*] Here it is. A box for everyone.

[Picks up the basket and carries it around with him, giving a box to each guest. They stand facing the audience, eating the candy. When no one is looking, GHOST glides up behind WILLIAM and sprinkles some pepper and salt over his candy. Then GHOST scurries back behind the cornstalks.]

FRANCES *[obviously enjoying her candy]*. This is good candy, William.

JAMES *[agreeing]*. Yes, it is.

PENELOPE. Did you get it at Doe's?

WILLIAM *[in a pleased tone]*. Yes. Their candy's always good. *[Puts a piece of candy in his mouth. His expression changes to dismay.]*

NATALIE. Why, what is the matter, William?

NORTON. Perhaps he's going to be sick! *[Stares steadily at WILLIAM.]*

WILLIAM *[looking at the others]*. Does your candy taste queer?

ANNA. No. Mine's fine!

NORTON. I guess you imagine it.

WILLIAM *[indignantly]*. I don't imagine it!

JOHN. Try another! Maybe the one you took just happened to be that way!

WILLIAM [*doubtfully*]. Well— [*ALL gather about him while he carefully chooses another piece. Naturally, since the barn is dusky, he cannot see the salt and pepper on the candy.*] I'll take this one. [*Puts it in his mouth.*]

PENELOPE. How's that?

WILLIAM [*sputtering*]. Oh—er—This is worse than the other!

FRANCES. Come—get a lantern and look at the candy! [*Runs over to the wall and takes down one of the lanterns. Then runs back to WILLIAM with it.*] Here—we'll look at it! [*Holds the lantern directly over the box of candy.*]

NORTON. It looks like pepper and salt.

WILLIAM [*putting his finger in the box and tasting it*]. It is pepper and salt!

JAMES. You'd better buy your candy some other place, next time.

DOROTHY [*shuddering*]. I knew this barn was haunted!

WILLIAM. I tell you it isn't. There's somebody here, and I know it! John, you and James and Norton stand over by the door so what's here can't get out. [*The boys obey.*] Now, the rest of us'll chase him. [*WILLIAM and the girls run behind one pile of cornstalks. GHOST runs from behind one pile of cornstalks to the other.*]

DOROTHY [*shrieking*]. It's a ghost! It's a ghost. [*A lively chase follows. Finally they ALL corner GHOST and tear the sheet from him. There stands AUSTIN.*]

WILLIAM. Austin!

ANNA. So it's you who's been doing all this, Austin Gray!
[*ALL gather about him.*]

FRANCES [*severely*]. You should be ashamed to spoil your brother's party like this!

WILLIAM. Why did you do it?

AUSTIN. I'll tell you why. You never invited me! Just because I'm younger you never invited me!

PENELOPE. Didn't you invite him, William?

WILLIAM [*in a hesitating tone*]. Well, no, I didn't. I had just an even number of boys and girls.

FRANCES. William, you should have asked him.

NORTON. I think so, too.

JOHN. It wasn't right to leave him out.

AUSTIN [*gazing intently at WILLIAM*]. Am I invited now?

WILLIAM [*hastily*]. Oh, of course—of course. [*AUSTIN quickly tosses the discarded sheet into the corner.*]

WILLIAM [*in a brisk business-like tone*]. We'll start all over again, now that we're rid of the Halloween ghost.

CURTAIN

THE CONSCIENTIOUS SCARECROW

TIME OF PLAYING: *About twenty minutes*

CHARACTERS

SCARECROW

FARMER JONES

JACK }
BOB } *sons of FARMER JONES*

PLUTO }
KING COLE } *black cats*

SIX GOBLINS

THREE GHOSTS

FOUR WITCHES

FOUR JACK-O'-LANTERNS

COSTUMES

SCARECROW: *Ragged coat and trousers. Battered hat.
Wisps of straw show at wrists and neck.*

FARMER JONES: *Overalls. Broad-brimmed straw hat.*

JACK and BOB: *Boys' ordinary apparel.*

CATS: *Black cambric pajama suits. Long tails. Black
tight-fitting hoods with pointed ears.*

GOBLINS: *Brown cambric pajama suits. Brown tight-
fitting caps, with broad ears.*

GHOSTS: *Draped sheets.*

WITCHES: *Black cambric dresses. Tall pointed hats. Each carries a broomstick.*

JACK-O'-LANTERNS: *Each wears a green cap and a jack-o'-lantern mask.*

SCENE: *A cornfield on the Jones farm. Stacks of corn and pumpkins placed wherever space permits.*

As the curtain rises, SCARECROW is seen standing alone in the center of the cornfield. FARMER JONES and his sons enter.

FARMER JONES. Well, everything looks all right in this cornfield so far. I hope there won't be any mischief done here tonight. Last year some mischievous sprite set fire to the dry cornstalks, and I was afraid for a while that the barn might burn, too.

JACK. This old scarecrow looks so lifelike that I don't believe anyone will come around here tonight. They'd be sure to think that some man was standing on guard.

BOB. I believe you're right. The scarecrow may keep the rascals from carrying away the pumpkins from the next field, too. [*Rearranges SCARECROW's hat.*] So long, old fellow! Remember, the Jones family is depending on you to keep everything in good shape around here tonight.

[*Exit FARMER JONES, JACK, and BOB.*]

SCARECROW [*relaxes from the stiff position he has been holding and moves his arms about*]. I wonder what this Halloween thing is they're talking about. There must be something unusual in the air, because I feel so different from anything I have ever felt before. I can actually move my arms and walk about, which is very strange. Phew! I am stiff after standing here in the same position all summer. Dear me, I wonder what is the matter with my back. [*He tries to scratch his back.*]

[*Enter the two black cats.*]

KING COLE. You seem to be in difficulty. What is the trouble?

SCARECROW. It's my back. It itches like everything. I can't imagine what the trouble is. This straw that I am stuffed with has never bothered me before.

PLUTO. Ah, there's a reason for that, my good fellow. Don't you know that this is Halloween, when all the fairy folk are abroad? The witches will soon be flying past the moon on their brooms; ghosts and goblins are fast gathering in the haunted places; and, most important of all, my friend King Cole here and myself are just now on our way to work our magic spells.

SCARECROW. But what does all that have to do with my back itching?

PLUTO. You must be just as stupid as you look. Can't

you understand that this is the night when everything that is not mortal has a magic touch? Even a poor fellow like yourself, who does nothing all the year but stand in this cornfield to scare the birds away, has come to life. That is why your straw stuffing scratches your back.

SCARECROW. You needn't call me a "poor fellow." I assure you that I am a very valuable scarecrow and a great help to Farmer Jones. He often remarks that all the corn in this field would have been carried away by the birds this year if I hadn't guarded it so faithfully.

KING COLE. Very well, we shan't argue with you about it. And just to show you what jolly good fellows we are, we'll let you go along with us to have some fun tonight.

SCARECROW. What kind of fun are you going to have?

KING COLE. Perhaps we shall scare some horses so that they will run away. Or perhaps we shall climb up on the porch and frighten the maid so that she will fall down the stairs. Or we may creep into the hen house and scare the chickens so that they won't lay any eggs for a week. There's no end to the mischief we can do.

PLUTO. That is, up to twelve o'clock.

SCARECROW. Why only up till twelve?

PLUTO. After the stroke of twelve we have no more use of magic. We become just ordinary cats again. Well,

not exactly ordinary, of course, but unable to work the spells of Allhallows Eve.

SCARECROW. And what about these ghosts and goblins and witches you have been telling me about? Are they all going around brewing mischief, too?

KING COLE. Every one. We shall have great sport, I promise you. Here come some of them now. Perhaps we can all go together.

[*Enter WITCHES, GHOSTS, GOBLINS, and JACK-O'-LANTERNS.*]

Greetings, friends. I am glad to see that you are all abroad tonight and ready to work your magic spells. I have just been telling the scarecrow here that he may go along with us, if the rest of you are willing.

JACK-O'-LANTERN. I'm sure I don't mind if he comes. I have been a neighbor of his all summer, living over in the next field, and he has been very useful in keeping the small boys from running away with me before I was fully grown. He looks like old Farmer Jones himself in those clothes. Of course, I wasn't on speaking terms with him then, because that was before I had this mouth built, but I feel very friendly toward him.

WITCH. I don't mind allowing him to come along with us, but first I'd like to know whether or not he can do

anything. There's no point in taking a great, gawky-looking fellow like that along unless he is capable of making some mischief. Tell us, now, what can you do by way of scattering abroad the spirit of Halloween?

SCARECROW. I'm not sure just what I could do. You sec, I've never been around at all, and I really don't know what goes on in the world except what I can see from this field. Suppose you give me some idea of what you are going to do.

GOBLIN. That's no more than fair. Come on, brother goblins, let us sing and dance for this simple fellow and show him how we weave a magic spell.

[GOBLINS *join hands in a circle and dance about as they sing their song to the tune of "Sing a Song of Sixpence."*]

GOBLINS [*sing*].

Sing a song of goblins
Who weave a mystic spell.
How we work our magic
We'll never, never tell.
We can hide in thimbles
Or ride upon a breeze;
We can float on thistledown
And dance on maple leaves.

Sing a song of goblins,
Of merry, merry elves.
We sometimes bother others,
But always please ourselves.
We deal in pranks and mischief
By use of magic power.
We'll tease and torment where we choose
Until the midnight hour.

GOBLIN. This is the way we work. When we have found some person or animal that we want to bewitch, we dance about and sing our song and then utter the magic words "ink, spank, spink," and our power is complete. We can do anything we choose.

SCARECROW. Very exciting, indeed. And just what do you do, for instance?

GOBLIN. Oh, different things. We like variety. Farm animals do some very amusing things when they are under a spell, such as the pig trying to imitate the cat and walking along the fence, or the dog trying to pick a quarrel with the horse.

SCARECROW. That must be great sport. You are very unusual people. But what do the rest of these folk do? These ghosts, for example. I'm sure they must be very clever, too.

GHOST. We don't have to be clever or skilled in magic.

All we have to do is to walk along the highways or the riverbanks and we can start all kinds of trouble. I remember how I once came into the midst of a herd of cattle and they threw up their heels and scattered in every direction. The owner never did find all of those cows again. I laughed until I thought my sides would burst.

SCARECROW. You don't look as if you had ever laughed, but I suppose one can't always judge by appearances. Can you and your friends dance and sing the way these clever goblins do?

GHOST. Certainly. If you were not so stupid, you would have heard of us before. The dance of the ghosts is known all over the world for its weird beauty.

[GHOSTS *sway their bodies back and forth as they dance and sing to the tune of "Tenting Tonight."*]

We're ghosting tonight in the old cornfield,
Under a pale, cold moon.
We dance and we glide on the dead cornstalks,
Singing a mournful tune.
Ghosting tonight, ghosting tonight,
Spooking in the old cornfield.

SCARECROW. That is a most remarkable song and dance, I assure you. I never saw anything like it before.

GHOST. Of course you didn't and you probably never will again. It was very condescending of us to waste this much time on such an ordinary person as you.

SCARECROW. It was, indeed, and I appreciate it deeply.

WITCH. Humph! I wonder what he would say if he could see *our* dance!

SCARECROW. What! Do you mean to say that anyone as old as you can actually dance?

WITCH. Certainly we can dance! Age has nothing whatsoever to do with it. The witches' dance is a classic. The simple swaying of the ghosts can't compare with it in grace and charm.

SCARECROW. Oh—would you possibly consider doing it for me?

WITCH. We really shouldn't on such a busy night as this. No one else is quite so important on Halloween as the witches. We have our magic kettles to brew and—

SCARECROW. Excuse me for interrupting, but what do you do with the potion you brew in your kettles?

WITCH. Anything we choose, stupid. For my part I like to scatter it over the fields so that next year's crops will be poor.

SCARECROW. Well, I don't want to waste your time, but I should certainly like to see if you really dance as well as the ghosts and goblins did.

WITCH [*scornfully*]. As *well*? Didn't I tell you that we

can dance a hundred times better? Come, sisters, let us show this fellow what a really finished dance looks like.

[WITCHES stand in a square astride their brooms, facing each other. Dance steps can be arranged so that they go back and forth in the square, passing one another. On the second, fourth, and eighth lines jumping steps will be effective. The tune is "Comin' Thro' the Rye."]

From afar we all assemble .
In a shady dell.
How we brew our secret potions
We will never tell.
If you see us riding skyward
Past the silver moon,
You will know our magic spell
Will fall upon you soon.

SCARECROW. That is most remarkable. I had no idea that witches could be so entertaining. It seems that you can all sing and dance except the Jack-o'-lanterns.

JACK-O-LANTERN. Who says that we can't sing and dance? Just because we were pumpkins a few days ago is no reason why we can't do something interesting, now that we have faces. Come on, boys, let's sing that song we

learned last night when we were all sitting out in the back yard.

[JACK-O'-LANTERNS *stand in a row facing the audience.*
Tune: "Yankee Doodle."]

JACK-O'-LANTERNS [*sing*].

Jack-o'-lanterns bright and gay
With faces always grinning,
We're tripping lightly on our way;
The mischief's now beginning.

CHORUS

We can sing a merry song,
Join in sprightly dances;
We can help the fun along
By casting fiery glances.

SCARECROW. Yes, you are right. You are just as entertaining as the rest of these clever people.

PLUTO. Come, now, all of you. We have wasted enough time on this fellow. Let us be off and about our night's work.

WITCH [*pointing upward*]. Look! Look!

[*ALL look upward.*]

GHOST. What is it? What's the matter?

WITCH. Look at the moon. It has reached the top of the sky. It must be midnight.

GOBLIN. Midnight! Then all our magic power will be gone and we can't do any mischief tonight. Quick, away, before it is too late!

[The clock begins to strike.]

KING COLE. Listen! It is too late now. The town clock is striking twelve. *[Turning to SCARECROW.]* I see what you've done. You've kept us here purposely, pretending to be interested in our songs and dances. You weren't quite so stupid as we thought you were. But we'll fix you, my fine fellow. We'll tear you to pieces.

[ALL start toward SCARECROW, but the clock stops chiming and their hands drop useless at their sides.]

GOBLIN. It's too late. All our power is gone. We'll have to go back to our haunts for another year.

[ALL walk off the stage in a drooping, dejected manner. The SCARECROW stiffens into his former position.]

[Enter FARMER JONES and his boys.]

FARMER JONES. You see, everything is as quiet and peaceful as can be. I told you there was nothing wrong out here.

JACK. Well, I was sure that I heard a noise of some kind, but I see you're right. There doesn't seem to be anyone about.

BOB. Everything will be all right as long as we have good old Jim Scarecrow out here. I always said he looked almost lifelike.

[Exit FARMER JONES, JACK and BOB. SCARECROW turns his head stiffly to look after them. He smiles in satisfaction and nods his head slowly up and down three times.]

CURTAIN

HALLOWEEN FROLIC

TIME OF PLAYING: *About thirty-five minutes*

CHARACTERS

TOM }
MAY } *three children*
JACK }

WITCH, *a tall girl*

THREE GHOSTS, *tall girls or boys*

FIVE GOBLINS, *small boys*

SIX FAIRIES, *small girls*

SIX ELVES, *small boys*

COSTUMES

TOM, MAY, and JACK: *Clothing suitable for school.*
Each carries a jack-o'-lantern.

WITCH: *Long, black, flowing robes and a tall, pointed hat. Carries a broom or cane.*

GHOSTS: *Draped sheets. These must be held high enough not to trip the wearers.*

GOBLINS: *Brightly colored, loose-fitting garments as grotesque as possible. Close-fitting hoods with pointed ears.*

FAIRIES: *Thin dresses in pastel shades. A band of sil-*

ver paper holds a small cluster of flowers in place on the front of each head. Wings made of heavy manila paper are sewed to each back. Wings may be brightly colored with crayolas, using black for veining.

ELVES: *Tight-fitting, pointed caps of green crepe paper with a tuft of contrasting color at the peak. First ELF carries a fan made of feathers, or a large leaf. Second ELF carries a toy. Third ELF carries a large feather.*

SCENE: *Stage is set to represent a forest of small bare trees with nine blocks of wood in the shape of stumps arranged as seats for WITCH, GHOSTS, and GOBLINS. Several small trees or branches of autumn leaves are mounted in Christmas tree stands. A large box is made to look like a rock by covering it with crumpled manila paper. This should be placed at right front of stage. The largest stump should be placed in the center of the stage.*

WITCH *enters from left and hobbles to large stump near the center of stage.*

WITCH. Well, well, Halloween again! I wonder what tricks my people will play tonight. Ah! There they come now!

[A low, whizzing sound is heard.]

[*Enter from right and left, ELVES, GOBLINS, and GHOSTS. They group themselves near WITCH.*]

WITCH [*shading her eyes*]. Greetings, my people. How are you tonight? It's about time you were setting off for Earth! Hurry, hurry! You have much to do.

[*Exit right, ELVES, GHOSTS, and GOBLINS.*]

WITCH [*hobbling about*]. It's high time I was setting off for Earth, too!

[*Exit left.*]

[*Enter from left, MAY, TOM and JACK, each carrying a jack-o'-lantern.*]

TOM.

Jack, where are you going tonight?

JACK.

I came out to catch a sight
Of the fairies and elves who meet, they say,
On Halloween night to dance and play.

TOM.

I've heard that same old tale they've told to you;
But I don't believe a word of it's true!

MAY.

Oh, behind this rock we can play "I spy"
On the fairies and elves who come dancing by!

[As stage lights are extinguished, children set their jack-o'-lanterns on the rock. A low moaning and whistling sound is heard backstage.]

TOM. I wonder what fun we'll have tonight. [*The noise continues.*]

MAY [*nervously*]. Oh, Jack! What's that?

JACK [*trying to be brave*]. Only the wind! [*The noise becomes louder.*]

MAY [*in frightened tone*]. Oh, Tom! I know it is something! [*Noise grows weaker and stops as WITCH enters.*]

CHILDREN [*in extreme terror*]. Oh! Oh! Oh!

[CHILDREN *hide behind rock.*]

WITCH. My dear little children, don't be afraid! I'm the Queen of Halloween and I'm your friend. I'll call my people and, as a special treat, you may see all my Halloween folk.

[As WITCH blows whistle and waves her wand, enter GHOSTS, GOBLINS, ELVES, and FAIRIES while a loud whizzing sound is heard. WITCH takes place at center stump. GHOSTS and GOBLINS take places right and left of WITCH. ELVES, left, FAIRIES, right, form a half-circle across the stage.]

[Each GOBLIN bows very low as he begins to speak.]

FIRST GOBLIN.

Oh, we are jolly goblins,
Scaring folks at night;

SECOND GOBLIN.

And when we run about them
They all scream with fright;

THIRD GOBLIN.

But really we are good ones,
We wouldn't hurt a mite!

FOURTH GOBLIN.

But this, you know, is a custom
We keep each Halloween night.

FIFTH GOBLIN [*in loud whisper*].

I tell you, if I catch one,
I'm going to squeeze him tight!

[GOBLINS *bow very low.*]

[CHILDREN *clap hands. Exit FAIRIES while ELVES
step to center.*]

FIRST ELF [*using fan*].

I'm a jolly little elf,
I just sit and fan myself.

SECOND ELF [*turning toward THIRD ELF*].

I'm a very funny little elf.
See my brother tickling himself!

THIRD ELF [*using feather under chin*].

I'm the funniest of the six

But sometimes I get myself in a fix!

FOURTH ELF [*motioning with hands*].

We merrily, merrily skip around,

Now on the tree-tops, and now on the ground.

FIFTH ELF.

I am a merry little elf

Playing around all by myself.

SIXTH ELF.

And now, my children kind,

I hope that you won't mind

That we are leaving you.

[*Exit ELVES. CHILDREN clap hands.*]

[*With a low, weird, crooning sound, GHOSTS advance to center stage, and bow very low. CHILDREN show fright and dodge behind rock to peep out later as they become more interested.*]

FIRST GHOST [*hollow voice*].

When Halloween night comes 'round,

Then, creeping softly along the ground,

My fellow comrades and I come

To scare the children and have some fun.

SECOND GHOST [*high-pitched voice*].

Yes, and all through the spooky night
We hurry around, without a light,
Creeping softly, here and there,
Singing weird songs without a care.

THIRD GHOST [*squeaky voice*].

So Halloween has come again.
Now we and our little fellow men
Go round and play most scary jokes
On both the big and little folks.

[GHOSTS *bow very low, step back to places, and are seated.* WITCH, GHOSTS, and GOBLINS *sing to the tune of "Rig a-Jig Jig and Away We Go."*]

We are little elves so gay;
Our caps of green, men ne'er have seen
Because we're hidden all the day,
But now it's Halloween!

CHORUS

Hoppity skip and away we go,
On Halloween, on Halloween;
Hoppity skip and away we go,
To dance on Halloween!

[As the song begins, ELVES enter, skipping in a circle to center front. As song is finished, they come to rest in a semicircle near center stage, but back far enough to allow FAIRIES to skip in a circle while the others sing to the same tune.]

We are little fairies fair,
In dresses light, with wings so bright.
We gaily flutter through the air
To dance on Halloween night.

CHORUS

We flutter our wings and away we go,
On Halloween, on Halloween.
We flutter our wings and away we go,
To dance on Halloween!

[Near the end of the chorus, ELVES move to right front of stage. FAIRIES complete the semicircle as they come to rest at left front.]

FIRST ELF.

Pretty fairies, may we join your play?

FIRST FAIRY.

Why, yes, little elves, of course you may.

FIRST FAIRY.

Tell us, pray tell us, oh, elves so gay,
How you have spent this bright autumn day.

FIRST ELF.

I rode on the leaves, red, yellow, and brown;
I danced with the wind, then fluttered down.

SECOND ELF.

A spider's web caught a butterfly yellow,
But I untangled the poor little fellow.

THIRD ELF.

A saucy crow, with feathers coal black,
Took me for a ride upon his back.

FOURTH ELF.

That big jack-o'-lantern in the old oak tree
Made the nicest kind of playhouse for me.

FIFTH ELF.

My milkweed parachute helped me to sail.
When the wind blew strong, I rode on the gale.

SIXTH ELF.

Now won't you tell us, fairies so bright,
What you have been doing from morning till night?

FIRST FAIRY.

I slept in a flower until the sun was high,
And then flew a race with a big butterfly.

SECOND FAIRY.

All day I picked burrs from the lambs' fleece so white.
The little lambs thanked me and bleated, "Good night."

THIRD FAIRY.

I shooed all the flies from a sick baby's bed;
This evening, the baby was better, they said.

FOURTH FAIRY.

Wee Benny was cross, but I tickled his cheek.
Then he laughed; together we played "Hide and seek."

FIFTH FAIRY.

In the heart of a rose, away from the sun,
I slept very sweetly till daylight was done.

SIXTH FAIRY.

And now before we say, "Good night,"
Let's dance once more with footsteps light.

[*ELVES and FAIRIES skip in couples, while chorus of "Fairies' Song" is sung until they have circled twice. They come to rest with ELVES behind FAIRIES. CHILDREN clap hands.*]

FIRST FAIRY.

We are surely fairy folks,
But we do not play the jokes
That our little comrades do.

[*Points toward ELVES.*]

We comfort all the children sweet,
That our small friends try to greet.
Often they're so rough that they
Scare the darlings all away,
So we had to come ourselves,
To change the mischief of the elves.

MAY.

FAIRIES, how sweet and nice of you!

THIRD FAIRY.

Now you, my darling children,
To your own homes must fly.
And here again next Halloween
To meet you we shall try.

[*Exit WITCH and all her troupe.*]

MAY.

What a merry time we had!
We should all be very glad
That we met the fairy folks
And they told us of their jokes.

JACK.

Well, now, Tom, tonight you have seen
That fairies and elves *do* dance on Halloween!

TOM.

Yes, JACK, what they told us was certainly true,
But it's getting quite cold. My fingers are blue!
Those goblins and elves surely know how to tease.
Come on! Let's go home, before we all freeze!

CURTAIN

MIDGIE'S HALLOWEEN MIX-UP

TIME OF PLAYING: *About twenty minutes*

CHARACTERS

BETTY WATSON, *a school girl, aged fourteen*

MIDGIE WATSON, *her little sister, aged ten*

CLAIRE ALLEN, *classmate of Betty, but poor*

MARTHA }
DOT } BETTY'S friends

A MAN'S VOICE

COSTUMES

MIDGIE: *Sweater, skirt, bobbie socks, and low-heeled shoes.*

CLAIRE ALLEN: *Ordinary street clothes; later changes to fancy Halloween costume.*

BETTY, MARTHA, and DOT: *Halloween costumes.*

TIME: *Halloween.*

SCENE: *The living room in BETTY'S home, furnished with chairs, tables, etc. Telephone on table, down-stage right. A long mirror stands at left against wall. Exits left and right. Left exit leads out-of-doors. Right exit leads to other parts of the house.*

At rise of curtain, BETTY is talking over telephone.

BETTY [*excitedly*]. And Martha, what do you think? Gloria Smith is coming to my party tonight. Isn't that wonderful? I never dreamed that she'd accept—she's so rich and important, but she phoned a minute ago to say she'd decided to come. Her chauffeur is coming by any minute to pick up a costume I have for her. I told her I wanted everyone to wear Halloween costumes and to mask. Well, I'll be looking for you in a few minutes. I'm just so excited about Gloria's coming, I hardly know what I'm doing. 'Bye, honey.

[*She hangs up, and moves distractedly about room, goes to table, picks up two large boxes and looks them over. MIDGIE enters, right, eating large peanut butter sandwich.*]

MIDGIE. Who was that you were talking to, Betty?

BETTY. It was Martha—if you must know. My goodness, Midgie, don't you ever do anything but eat peanut butter sandwiches?

MIDGIE. Sure, lots of things. But I like peanut butter. It's good. Makes you strong. Here, want to try some?

BETTY. Gracious, no. I've a million things to do. My guests will be arriving soon, and Gloria Smith is sending her chauffeur over for her costume. It's in this box. [*She holds up box, lifts costume up for MIDGIE to see.*]
I have to go upstairs. Will you give it to him?

MIDGIE. Gloria Smith. Is *she* coming? I don't know what you wanted to ask *her* for—the stuck-up old thing. [*She mimics affected voice.*] “Oh, how do you do, my deah Betty. What a deah little house you live in.” Apple sauce!

BETTY. That'll do from *you*, young lady. Gloria's a very rich, important girl. It's quite a feather in my cap to have her come here at all.

MIDGIE. Oh, yeah! Well, I'll give her the box, but I don't see why you want to put on airs. What's in the other box?

BETTY. It's a maid's costume for Claire Allen. She's coming to help serve the refreshments. I didn't want Gloria to know that we don't keep a maid.

MIDGIE. Why, Betty Watson, do you mean you're going to ask a nice girl like Claire to dress up and pretend she's our maid? Claire's just as good as anybody else who is coming to your party, and she's twice as nice as that old stuck-up Gloria.

BETTY. Oh, Claire won't mind. She knows I couldn't invite her to a party as I do the others. She'll be glad to help just to watch the fun. I left a sheet of instructions for her inside the box. If she comes early, please give it to her. Now don't forget, Midgie. *This* box is for Gloria's chauffeur, and the *other* is for Claire. [*She rushes out.*]

MIDGIE. Okay. [*She munches on sandwich, and there is a knock, left. MIDGIE goes to door.*]

MAN'S VOICE. Is there a box here for Miss Gloria Smith?

MIDGIE. Yes, it's right here. [*She goes to table, looks at boxes, can't make up her mind, closes her eyes a moment, grabs one, and takes it to door.*] I guess this is it. Here!

MAN'S VOICE. Thank you, miss.

[*Door closes.*]

MIDGIE. You're welcome. [*She runs to window, looks out, whistles, as if amazed.*] Boy what a car! Oh, here comes Claire. [*She rushes to door. Opens it.*] Hello, Claire.

CLAIRE [*entering*]. Hello, Midgie.

MIDGIE. Say, did you see that big car outside?

CLAIRE. Yes, I did. It belongs to Gloria Smith's father, doesn't it?

MIDGIE. Uh-huh. That man with the uniform on is their chauffeur. He came to get a costume for Gloria. She's coming to Betty's Halloween masquerade.

CLAIRE [*impressed*]. Is she, really? I came early. I told Betty I'd help serve. Do you know what I'm to do?

MIDGIE. Well—I guess [*she flounders*], I guess Betty wants you to put on the costume in that box. [*She picks up box.*] Here it is.

CLAIRE [*pleased*]. A costume? For me? How nice of Betty. I didn't expect to be fixed up like the rest of the girls at the party.

MIDGIE. You won't be—I mean, I hope you don't mind wearing the costume, Claire. [*She pushes CLAIRE toward right.*] There, you'd better hurry and change.

CLAIRE. All right, Midgie. [*She goes out, as MARTHA and DOT enter from left, both wearing Halloween costumes, and carrying masks.*]

MARTHA. Oh, hello, Midgie.

DOT. We came a little early. Where's Betty?

MIDGIE. She's upstairs primping. My, you girls look spooky.

DOT. You won't know us when we get our masks on. [*She goes to mirror, adjusts mask.*]

MARTHA. I understand Gloria Smith is coming to Betty's party. Is she here yet, Midgie?

MIDGIE. No. She just sent for her costume, so I guess she'll be a little late.

DOT. There, I'm ready. Let's go find the others.

MARTHA. Okay, I'm coming. [*She adjusts mask.*] See you later, youngster. [*MARTHA and DOT go out, and a moment later, BETTY rushes in.*]

BETTY. Have the girls come yet, Midgie?

MIDGIE. Yes, a couple of 'em are here. I shoed them into the recreation room.

BETTY. That's right. And did Gloria's chauffeur come for the costume?

MIDGIE. Yes, he was here. Look, Betty. I have to be going. My gang's waiting for me—we're going Halloweening. [*She starts out, left, stops, puts ticktack against door and makes loud noise with it.*]

BETTY [*nervously*]. Midgie, don't do that! My goodness you scared me. Run along. Gloria will be here in a minute.

[*MIDGIE laughs, goes out, and BETTY moves about the room putting finishing touches to decorations. She doesn't notice when CLAIRE enters, wearing gypsy costume and a mask over her face.*]

CLAIRE. Hello, Betty.

BETTY [*turns, speaks effusively*]. Oh, my dear, I'm so glad to see you. [*Takes CLAIRE's arm, leads her toward door, right. It is obvious from her manner that she has mistaken CLAIRE for GLORIA.*] Do you like the costume?

CLAIRE. It's perfectly lovely, Betty. Thank you so much. Now tell me, what shall I do first? I want to help. Shall I go to the kitchen?

BETTY [*artificially*]. Oh, my dear, the kitchen! What an idea! Why, you're a very special guest at this party. And anyhow, our maid has everything ready.

CLAIRE. But—I don't understand. I thought—

BETTY. You come right along with me. The others are all thrilled at having you at the party.

[BETTY and CLAIRE go out right, as MIDGIE enters, left, still carrying her ticktack. BETTY enters, right, at the same time.]

BETTY. Oh, there you are, Midgie.

MIDGIE. What's the matter?

BETTY. Plenty! Claire Allen—I want you to see if you can find her. She promised to be here early. Gloria Smith has arrived, and she must have thought it very odd that there was no maid at the door. Run along, Midgie, see if you can find her.

MIDGIE. Okay. [She starts out, returns, sticks her head inside and calls.] But I thought we lived in a Democracy.

BETTY. Oh, go along. [She rushes to table, straightening decorations, looks at self in glass. There is a knock and BETTY goes to door.]

MAN'S VOICE. I'm returning a costume from Miss Gloria Smith.

BETTY. Returning it? But you can't return a costume when Miss Smith is wearing it.

MAN'S VOICE. I don't know, miss. All Miss Gloria said was for me to return the costume—at once.

[Door closes, and BETTY returns to table carrying box.]

BETTY [mystified]. But I don't understand. Gloria's here

now, at my party. How could she return the costume she has on? [*She opens box, takes out maid's costume. Gasps.*] Oh, my goodness. There's been a mistake. This maid's costume was for Claire. Midgie's gone and mixed things up. I must call Gloria right away.

[*She goes to telephone, dials number frantically.*]

BETTY [*at telephone*]. Hello. Is this the Smith residence? May I speak to Gloria, please? Is this you, Gloria? This is Betty Watson. I want to tell you there was a mix-up about your costume. The costume sent you was intended for someone else. Of course, I wasn't intending to ask *you* to help in the kitchen. What's that? You're not interested in explanations? Well, all right, if you won't listen. [*BETTY slams down receiver, bursts into tears, drops into chair beside table as CLAIRE enters.*]

CLAIRE [*with her mask in her hand*]. Why Betty, dear! What's wrong?

BETTY [*not looking up*]. Oh, the most terrible thing has happened. Gloria Smith is simply furious at me. She says she'll never speak to me again.

CLAIRE. But why?

BETTY. She says—she says I've insulted her. I sent her a maid's costume and a list of instructions telling her how to serve the refreshments. She's *furious*.

CLAIRE. But how did that happen?

BETTY. The costumes got switched somehow, I can't understand. [*She turns, sees CLAIRE.*] Why, Claire, *that's* the costume I meant for Gloria. I thought you were Gloria when I saw you wearing it.

CLAIRE. I see. And you intended the maid's outfit for me. Was that it, Betty?

BETTY [*mortified*]. Well, I guess I did. And Claire, it serves me right, for acting like a snob. It was a horrid thing to do. Will you forgive me?

CLAIRE. Of course. We all make mistakes—on Halloween. Now wipe your eyes, and I'll help you serve the refreshments.

[*Door opens, and MARTHA and DOT enter, laughing, holding their masks. MIDGIE brings up rear.*]

MARTHA. Oh, Betty, we've had such fun unmasking and finding out who's who.

DOT. You never know who your real friends are with their masks on.

BETTY [*arm around CLAIRE*]. That's right. And it took Old Halloween to teach me who *my* friends are. Come on, let's get our refreshments.

MIDGIE. Hurrah! Let's do. I'm starved.

SPOOKS ON STRIKE

TIME OF PLAYING: *About fifteen minutes*

CHARACTERS

SPIRIT OF HALLOWEEN

NANCY } *two wide-awake children*
JIMMY }

BILLY BLACK CAT, *leader of strike*

SIMON SCARECROW

THE WIDOW WITCH

PETER PUMPKIN HEAD

SKELETON SAM

MISS GABBY GHOST

Any number of ghosts, goblins, witches, pumpkin heads or Halloween spooks that can be used to advantage.

COSTUMES

SPIRIT OF HALLOWEEN: *White dress; streamers of orange and black decorate skirt, or fall from shoulders; Halloween cut-outs are pinned on costume.*

JIMMY and NANCY: *Ordinary school or play clothes.*

BILLY BLACK CAT: *Tight black suit, black cat mask, ears wired to stand up, and long black tail wired to bend easily.*

SIMON SCARECROW: *Tattered clothes, ragged straw hat, large white gloves; everything limp and awkward.*

WIDOW WITCH: *Regulation witch costume.*

PETER PUMPKIN HEAD: *Orange crepe-paper head, orange and green costume, if possible.*

MISS GABBY GHOST: *Sheet and mask.*

SKELETON SAM: *Black costume with skeleton painted on it. Skull mask.*

NOTE: *Two much smaller children, wearing goblin costumes, can add to fun. They should run about among the spooks, hiding behind MISS GABBY GHOST, peering from various hiding places.*

SCENE: *Halloween Land, the day before Halloween. No setting is needed, but there may be a few stools, like stumps, which can be used for seats. A large box or screen stands at rear, behind which JIMMY and NANCY can hide.*

[Enter JIMMY and NANCY.]

NANCY. We'll have to hurry, Jimmy, if we are to have everything ready in time for our Halloween party tomorrow night.

JIMMY. Yes, we will, Nancy.

NANCY. I have all those black cats and witches to cut from paper.

JIMMY. And I must make two large jack-o'-lanterns for the front porch. [*There is a sound of voices.*]

NANCY. Listen, what is that?

JIMMY. It sounds like a lot of people.

[*Both children look to side.*]

NANCY. Look, Jimmy. It's a big procession coming. There's a black cat leading it. Goodness, what shall we do?

JIMMY. Let's hide back there until they go past. You never know *what* will happen around Halloween.

[*They run to back of stage and hide behind screen as procession enters, with BILLY BLACK CAT in lead. All creatures in the parade; GHOSTS, GOBLINS, WITCHES, BLACK CATS, SKELETONS, etc., enter. Some carry banners and placards which have the words: STRIKE, or STRIKE IN HALLOWEEN LAND, or similar words printed on them in large letters. SIMON SCARECROW brings up the end of procession, carrying his banner uncertainly. He finally sets it down, uses it as a cane, and leans on it.*]

BILLY BLACK CAT [*standing in front of others*]. Friends of Halloween Land, you may stop and rest. [*All creatures pause. WIDOW WITCH, PETER PUMPKIN HEAD, SIMON SCARECROW, MISS GABBY GHOST, SKELETON SAM move to front of platform.*]

BILLY BLACK CAT [*importantly*]. Friends and Fellow Citizens of Halloween Land, we are going to strike.

SIMON SCARECROW [*in low, gruff voice*]. Wol, who are we gonna strike?

GABBY GHOST [*very fast*]. We're not going to strike anybody, Simon Scarecrow. I declare, you are so silly, I don't see how anyone can be so foolish.

SIMON SCARECROW. It's not so hard.

[*ALL laugh.*]

BILLY BLACK CAT. Quiet, quiet every one. We, the folk of Halloween Land, are going to strike for our rights.

PETER PUMPKIN HEAD. What rights?

BILLY BLACK CAT. The right to be more important, for one thing, Peter Pumpkin Head. Why, think of the other holidays. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July—they're all more important than Halloween. Take Christmas, for instance. Folks talk about it for weeks in advance. The books and magazines are full of it. I've heard that children are extra *good* around Christmas time, whereas grown people consider Halloween a time for mischief making.

SIMON SCARECROW. Is that so? Wol, I kind of like a little fun myself now and then.

WIDOW WITCH. Well, of course everyone likes Christmas,

but what about Thanksgiving? Is *it* so important?
BILLY BLACK CAT. It is indeed, Widow Witch. It is so important that the president of the country reads a proclamation about it. And nobody ever reads a proclamation about Halloween!

ALL [*ad lib*]. That's right, they don't, etc.

BILLY BLACK CAT. Why, Halloween isn't even on the calendar. If the children didn't manage to keep track of the day, it might be forgotten. No one takes it seriously. A sad situation, my friends, a sad situation. *That* is why we must strike!

SIMON SCARECROW. Strike! [*He bangs his stick down; everyone jumps.*]

SKELETON SAM. It's certainly time we Halloween folks were taken seriously. Why, look at me. I'm really very important. They use *me* in schools to teach the names of the bones of the body.

GABBY GHOST. I should be taken seriously, too. It's no fun having people scream and pretend to be afraid of me. I'm certainly a well-behaved ghost.

WIDOW WITCH. And I'm tired of being called homely. After all, when I get fixed up I'm really quite good looking—for a witch. [*She takes out mirror, inspects herself.*]

PETER PUMPKIN HEAD. None of you suffers as I do. Think of having to go about grinning all the time, when I'm

and the girls of the world love Halloween very much.

ALL. They do, really?

SPIRIT. Here are two of them now. Let's ask them.

[JIMMY and NANCY have come forward.]

JIMMY. We heard what you were saying, and we certainly do love Halloween, don't we, Nancy?

NANCY. Of course we do. Why, Christmas and Halloween and Thanksgiving and birthdays and Fourth of July are all lovely days.

BILLY BLACK CAT. Then why aren't we on the calendar?

JIMMY. Halloween may not be shown on the calendar, but we children all mark it down. Every year, Nancy and I put a circle around the day—October 31.

NANCY. And then we mark off the days until Halloween.

[ALL look at each other. Murmurs of Is that true? etc., go through the crowd.]

JIMMY. Please don't strike, folks of Halloween Land. You have given us so much fun and happiness, we love you all.

BILLY BLACK CAT [*uncertainly*]. Well, perhaps—

SPIRIT. That is true. Children love Halloween, and many grown folks do, too. Come now, Billy Black Cat. Call off your strike.

BILLY BLACK CAT [*to others*]. Strike's called off, folks. Put away your signs.

ALL. Hurrah! Strike's called off.

SIMON SCARECROW. Hurrah! Now I don't have to strike anybody but a few crows.

GABBY GHOST. Well, I'm sure it's a great relief to me. I didn't want to strike in the first place. I like Halloween as well as the rest do—

WIDOW WITCH. Sh-h. Do be quiet, Gabby Ghost. We're going to sing a song.

SPIRIT OF HALLOWEEN. Let's all sing one song together before these children have to say good-by.

[ALL sing to the tune of "Rueben and Rachel."]

There's a night in late October
When strange creatures may be seen.
'Tis a time for fun and frolic,
Merry, scary Halloween.

You will see strange spooks and goblins,
Witches, too, if eyes are keen.
'Tis a time for fun and frolic
Ghoulish, foolish Halloween.

Pumpkin faces grinning widely,
Goblins fat and goblins lean.
'Tis a time for fun and frolic.
Then hurrah for Halloween!

THE HALLOWEEN PARADE

TIME OF PLAYING: *About fifteen minutes*

CHARACTERS

BETSY

DONALD

MASTER OF CEREMONIES, *a small boy*

WITCH, *a tall girl*

CAT, *boy or girl*

BAT, *boy or girl*

GOBLINS, *girls and boys*

GHOST, *boy or girl*

GROUP CHARACTERS, *girls and boys*

COSTUMES

BETSY, DONALD, MASTER OF CEREMONIES: *Dressed in school clothes.*

WITCH: *Witch costume, tall hat, broom, etc. Some teeth are blacked out.*

CAT: *Costume made from long underwear dyed black. Make hood as parka, but no points. Sew to back of neck. Sew on ears and long tail. Make whiskers from coarse black thread, varnished to make stiff.*

BAT: *Costume made of burlap or any brown material.*

Make large wings by covering with brown material, wire shaped into wings. Sew to shoulders.

GOBLINS: *Very ragged pants and shirts. The more disreputable they look, the better.*

GHOST: *Costume made from sheet. White mask.*

GROUP CHARACTERS: *Halloween costumes of any kind.*

SCENE: *Stage is set with many small limbs from trees.*

Autumn leaves are placed about stage. Background must have a full moon, made of cardboard covered with orange crepe paper. Hollowed-out pumpkin faces with lighted candles to be placed at intervals across front or back stage, as convenient. Two-thirds down right stage place a corn shock. Can be made from cardboard in the shape of a small tent, and the front side of it covered with corn stalks. Place largest pumpkin with big candle by corn shock, to light characters in last scene of play.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES [*enters right*].

Greetings, folks, and how do you do?

We're going to present a show for you.

Watch for the witches, ghosts, and bats,

And Mr. Peter Pumpkin, and the cross-eyed cats.

The lights burn dim 'round the devil's slide,

Hop on your broomstick; let's all take a ride.

[*Exit right.*]

[Enter left, as many children as desired, dressed in Halloween costumes of any kind.]

Song—Tune: “Oh! Susanna.”

We come out here, the moon so bright, the children
for to see.

Witches, ghosts and bats and cats and goblin men
are we.

It was last year this very time that we did appear.
We’re sorry, folks, we haven’t learned how to bring
you much good cheer.

CHORUS

Oh, don’t you leave us, oh, don’t go away.
We’ll let you in on our secrets
If you promise just to stay.

We haven’t many finer points, and that you know is
true,

But we keep you in a great suspense
While the witches brew their brew.
The ghost he has a rattling time
When he clanks those heavy chains.
The bat stays hid in the top of the cave,
But the cat don’t mind the rain.

REPEAT CHORUS

[*Half of children exit left, half right, back of corn shock. As children exit, BETSY enters from front right, just in time to see the last character, the WITCH, leave stage. She looks after her, then at audience and speaks.*]

BETSY [*walking to center of stage*].

Well, what was that? Looked like a witch.

I could tell by her hat.

[*Footsteps are heard off stage and BETSY runs and hides back of corn shock as MASTER OF CEREMONIES enters from right stage front. At extreme back stage enter WITCH and CAT from left, BAT and GHOST from right. They stand silently in background as MASTER OF CEREMONIES speaks.*]

MASTER OF CEREMONIES.

See what I mean about that ride?

Sh—h—h [*drawn out*] don't tell a soul,

But they've plenty to hide.

Why I've heard it said, and I'm sure it's true,

The witch puts poison in her brew.

[*At the word "witch," WITCH comes down stage and laughs shrilly. The MASTER OF CEREMONIES steps aside, but doesn't look back. Looks frightened as WITCH speaks.*]

WITCH.

He, he, he, he [*rising inflection*]. I'm the witch,
all right.

I spy on you by day, I ride the sky lanes at night.

I'm always there in the dark of the moon,

And I'll see you again, but soon [*dragged out*], but
soon.

[*The WITCH straddles broomstick and laughing shrilly gallops off left stage front. The MASTER OF CEREMONIES watches wide-eyed. He now steps back to previous position. BETSY sticks head out just enough to make herself noticed and ducks back as MASTER OF CEREMONIES speaks.*]

MASTER OF CEREMONIES.

I really didn't mean to get you into that.

What I really meant to say was

'Bout those awful bats and cats.

[*The BAT and CAT have been slowly moving up on each side of the MASTER OF CEREMONIES and they get him in between them. CAT speaks.*]

CAT.

Meower [*as cat would meow*] so I'm an awful cat!

You'll have cause to remember that.

What do you say, Mr. Bat?

[The MASTER OF CEREMONIES has been squirming and trying to get away from between the CAT and BAT, but can't. He looks frightened at first one, then the other.]

BAT.

I've never harmed a soul. I only come out at night,
But we'll teach you to speak more kindly
Or we'll give you an awful fright.

[The MASTER OF CEREMONIES stands there shaking and looks first at one exit then the other as BAT and CAT move slowly off stage. Just at exit the cat meows loudly and BETSY comes half-way out of hiding, but darts back as MASTER OF CEREMONIES speaks.]

MASTER OF CEREMONIES *[eyes blinking]*.

Whew, I never thought it could happen, at least not
to me,

But I reckon it did, if you can believe what you see.
But who's afraid anyway of a witch, a bat, or a cat?
I don't believe in ghosts that walk,
And I can tell you that.

[The GHOST has silently come up behind the MASTER OF CEREMONIES and quietly rattles his chains. The MASTER OF CEREMONIES looks first one way then the other, and not seeing ghost, starts to speak.]

MASTER of CEREMONIES. Why—!

[Breaks off as GHOST rattles chains loudly and peers over the shoulder of MASTER OF CEREMONIES. The MASTER OF CEREMONIES sees him, jumps, screams at top of lungs and runs quickly off stage left, followed by GHOST still clanking chains. This must be done quickly. BETSY is sticking head out from behind corn shock as this scene takes place and looks very scared. At their exit any number of children dressed as goblins look in from every possible entrance. First one then another says a drawn-out "Sh—h—h." They come on stage stealthily and some squat down, others stand. One steps to center of stage and speaks.]

GOBLIN.

We are the goblins, we're known to all.
We've kept you in mischief, we're always on call.
We even frighten the witches, we're all about.

[GOBLINS speak in chorus.]

And the goblins'll get you if you don't watch out.

[The GOBLINS all sing.]

We are the bad little goblins.
We haven't any clothes or finery.
We watch at night, we hate the light,
And we don't like company.

We always get you into trouble,
We are wicked and we're cruel.
We yell and yell, and run pell mell,
And never, never go to school.

[Just at close of verse a boy's voice off left stage is heard calling "Betsy, Betsy," from far away. The GOBLINS all jump to their feet and run to the left of stage. With their hands to their ears they listen as boy's voice calls "Betsy" again, nearer this time. GOBLINS scamper around getting behind one another, presumably trying to hide, but all move to right side of stage as the boy calls "Betsy" just at stage entrance. The GOBLINS all back off stage. Boy enters, looks behind bushes for girl, but not finding her, calls.]

DONALD *[still looking for Betsy]*.

Betsy, oh Betsy, you better come quick,
Mother wants us and she's got a stick.

BETSY *[crawls out from behind corn shock, brushes at her dress and says crossly]*. Here I am, Donald, there's where I've been *[points to hiding place]*.

And I saw witches an' ghosts an' little goblin men.

DONALD.

You saw no such thing, you're fibbing, too.
I'll tell Mother, that's what I'll do.

[BETSY walks over to DONALD and shakes her finger in his face.]

BETSY.

I guess I was there. I know what I saw.
If I were a boy I'd punch your jaw.

DONALD.

Now don't get mad, but if that's true,
I want to see 'em the same as you.

BETSY [*somewhat mollified*].

Well, I don't know if they'll come back at all,
They ran like mad when they heard you call.

DONALD.

Let's sit by this corn shock.
Then we can see 'em and hear 'em talk.

[*They sit by corn shock, and DONALD speaks.*]

DONALD.

Tell me what happened, if you can,
'Cause I've never seen a ghost or a goblin man.

BETSY [*squirms around trying to get comfortable*].

There was a witch and a ghost and a bat and a cat,
[*Laughingly.*]

And they sure looked funny from where I sat.

DONALD [*interested, turns to her*].

What did they do and what did they say?

Did they just stand 'round or did they play?

BETSY [*lays head back against corn shock, so sleepy the words come slowly*].

No, they didn't 'xactly play, I don't think.

[*Yawns, stretches arms, squirms around.*]

Oh, me, I'm sleepy. Wish I had a drink.

DONALD [*eagerly, and rising on one knee*].

If I went down to the spring and brought you back a drink,

Would you stay awake and watch with me, huh, do you think?

[*DONALD gets to feet as BETSY speaks.*]

BETSY [*almost asleep*].

Sure I'll watch with you, I told you I would,

And the goblins'll get you if you don't be good.

[*DONALD runs off stage at right. BETSY's head falls over on corn shock, sound asleep. [ALL characters enter and sing.]*

Song—Tune: "Little Annie Rooney."

She's little Betsy, don't we know,

She spied on us, she saw our show.

Soon she'll wake up.
Dream on while you may,
We'll come back and see you next Halloween day.

[As song is being sung, two GOBLINS quietly go around blowing out the candles in the pumpkins. Leave the candle in the pumpkin by the corn shock until last. Time this so the song is finished as last candle is being blown out. This leaves stage in complete darkness as characters exit.]

CURTAIN

IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

TIME OF PLAYING: *About fifteen minutes*

CHARACTERS

DON	DIANA
ALLAN	STANLEY
MARGARET	PHIL
PATTY	

COSTUMES

At opening, MARGARET, PATTY and DIANA wear ordinary sweaters and skirts; later, they wear any type of Halloween costumes. DON and ALLAN wear simple Halloween costumes, such as overalls, big hats, or cowboy suits. STANLEY and PHIL are much taller, larger boys, and both wear costumes and masks.

SCENE: *Interior of clubhouse, simply furnished with a few plain chairs. Table down center. There should be exits left and right, and a window, if possible. At rise of curtain, MARGARET, PATTY, and DIANA are decorating the clubhouse with autumn leaves, orange and black crepe paper, and jack-o'-lanterns.*

MARGARET [*stands back, views work*]. There, how does it look?

PATTY. Grand. Is this all the crepe paper we have, Margaret?

MARGARET. Yes, it is. You know—

PATTY. There's a *paper* shortage.

[ALL *laugh*.]

DIANA. Well, we'd better hurry home and change costumes or the rest of the gang will be here before we're dressed.

PATTY. I thought Don and Allan were coming early to help decorate.

MARGARET [*provoked*]. I thought so, too. Those boys make me so angry. Do you know where they went?

DIANA. No. Where?

MARGARET. They went out trick or treating!

PATTY. After all we said about it?

MARGARET. Yes, after all we said. Don says girls are sissies and that everybody goes trick or treating on Halloween, and it's all part of the fun.

DIANA. Fun for them, perhaps, but not so much fun for the ones who have to hand over the treats.

PATTY. It's just that I don't like the principle involved—threatening people is what it amounts to. It's the same thing as saying: You give us something we want or we'll soap your windows or let the air out of your tires or do something you won't like.

here's some fudge and stuff for the party tonight. [*Puts box on table.*] We'll have to go easy on it, though. Sugar rationing, you know. Mom says she can't spare any more.

DON. Fudge! Say, doesn't that sound good! Look, Allan, maybe we'd better not say anything to the girls about our trick or treating. You know how they feel about it.

ALLAN. Aw, girls are sissies. I don't care if they know. Trick or treating is just part of Halloween.

[*There is a sound at door.*]

DON. That must be the girls, now.

[*Enter STANLEY and PHIL, carefully masked.*]

STANLEY [*in gruff voice*]. Trick or treat.

PHIL. Hand over the eats, fellas.

DON. Hey, what is this? Who are you, anyhow?

STANLEY. Wouldn't you like to know! Well, let's have the stuff. Give, fellas. Give.

ALLAN. You mean you're going to take our food?

PHIL. That's right. Or maybe you'd rather we did a little tricking. I saw a nice shiny bike outside. How'd you like me to let the air out of your tires?

ALLAN. You let my bike alone.

DON. Aw, they can't do anything.

STANLEY. Oh, no? Well, how about some nice juicy mud balls thrown at your clubhouse?

DON. Oh, no, don't do that! We worked all summer painting it.

ALLAN. We might as well give in to the big bullies. Here you are. [*They hand over the pile of refreshments, which PHIL and STANLEY put into their pockets. ALLAN reluctantly gives them the box of fudge. PHIL looks inside, smells, grins happily.*]

PHIL. Come on, let's get out of here.

STANLEY. Okay. And thanks for the eats, boys. We enjoyed trick or treating here. [*They go out, leaving DON and ALLAN staring after them.*]

DON [*fuming*]. Those big bullies! Of all the mean tricks!

ALLAN. They must have looked in the window and seen our eats. Boy, when I think about that fudge—[*He clenches fists. The two boys sit despondently staring straight ahead as the three girls enter, wearing Halloween costumes.*]

PATTY. Well, here we are.

MARGARET. Why, what's the matter?

DIANA. It looks as if there's going to be a funeral here instead of a Halloween party.

DON. Aw, some big bullies came around here trick or treating, and they took our eats.

[*Girls look at each other, giggling.*]

PATTY. Why, that's too bad. Why did you let them?

ALLAN. Say, do you know what they threatened to do?

They were going to let the air out of my bike tires!

DON. And throw mud balls at the clubhouse!

ALLAN. I hope the police catch those guys. Going around trick or treating like that.

PATTY. But I thought you said it was all right.

ALLAN. I thought it was, only I guess it depends on who does it.

DIANA. You said it didn't hurt to trick or treat Mrs. Brown, and you threw ashes all over her porch because she didn't give you anything.

ALLAN. I know. But I wish I hadn't—now.

PATTY. And you boys were going to trick or treat old Mr. Barrows, and you know he's poor and lives all alone.

DON. Well, you don't have to rub it in.

MARGARET. It seems to make a difference who gets tricked.

ALLAN. I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to go right over to Mrs. Brown's now and clean her porch. Wait till I get the broom. [*He gets broom from corner.*]

PATTY. She'll think you're a witch when she sees you with that broom.

ALLAN. Never mind. Come on and help me, Don.

DON. Naw, I guess I can't. I think I'll go carry a few garbage pails back where they belong.

MARGARET. Good for you, boys. And to prove we think

you're all right, here's your booty! [*Girls put candy bars, fruit, boxes of food, etc., on table.*]

ALLAN. Hey, where'd you get that stuff?

DIANA. Shall we break down and confess, girls?

PATTY. We might as well. You see, boys, those two big bullies who were here tonight happen to be my two big brothers.

DON. They are?

PATTY. Yes, we asked them to come here and trick or treat, just to see how you boys would take it.

ALLAN. We can take it, all right. I guess the joke's on us, isn't it, Don?

DON [*sheepishly*]. I guess so. It's as Margaret says—it does make a difference. I'll not do any more trick or treating—this or any other year.

MARGARET. You boys are real sports. We'll go with you and help you put things in order. And then we'll come back here and meet the rest of the gang. My mother's coming over in half an hour with cocoa and hot dogs. And pumpkin pie!

BOYS. Pumpkin pie. Hurrah! Let's go! [*ALL go out, as curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

WHO LAUGHS LAST

TIME OF PLAYING: *About twenty minutes*

CHARACTERS

MR. GROUCHER, *a near-sighted old man*

MRS. GROUCHER, *his wife*

ROGER, *ten years old*

ANN, *his sister, nine years old*

GOBLIN LEADER

GOBLINS, *five or six*

SOUND EFFECTS OPERATORS, *two children*

COSTUMES

MR. GROUCHER: *Long trousers. Long, old-fashioned coat. Spectacles. Draped sheet in ghost scene, worn over a raincoat. No spectacles in ghost scene.*

MRS. GROUCHER: *Gingham housedress. White apron tied at the waist. Hair done up in a tight knot on top of head.*

ROGER: *Boy's ordinary apparel. Short heavy coat. Cap. Carries a jack-o'-lantern, with a lighted flash-light inside, suspended from his arm. Also carries a ticktack attached to a long cord.*

ANN: *Girl's ordinary apparel. Short coat. Cap or head scarf.*

GOBLINS: *Black cambric, belted tunics. Long black stockings reaching to hips. Black helmets with broad ears attached. GOBLIN LEADER with yellow helmet and ears.*

TIME: *Eight o'clock on Halloween.*

SCENE: *The front yard of Mr. GROUCHER'S cottage. Across rear of stage, and placed three feet from back wall, is the exterior of Mr. GROUCHER'S house, showing the front door and window. The door must be one that can be opened and closed. The window may be made of plain cellophane or waxed paper and should be lighted from behind. A small hook must be placed at one side of window, to which the tick-tack may be fastened. Right front, a shock of corn large enough for two children to hide behind. Similar corn shock left front, with a rustic bench placed before it. There must be exits left and right, in addition to the exit through the door of Mr. GROUCHER'S house. The stage should be rather dimly lighted throughout the play. A spotlight may be directed upon a large, orange moon mounted high on rear wall of stage.*

Off stage, a wooden cigar box and a broad, coarse rasp are needed to produce the noise of the ticktack. This is done by drawing the rasp over the edge of the

open cigar box. A tub of water and several flat sticks are needed.

[*Enter MR. GROUCHER from right.*]

MR. GROUCHER. I'm glad I came home before any mischief started. [*Walks over to bench and looks around.*]
Everything seems to be all right so far. [*Sits on bench. Enter MRS. GROUCHER from door of house.*]

MRS. GROUCHER [*peering left and right*]. Is that you, Groucher?

MR. GROUCHER [*getting up and pacing back and forth*].
Yes. I'm watching for the mischief-makers. I hate Halloween and all the trouble those neighbor children bring us. I'd like to put a stop to it.

MRS. GROUCHER [*soothingly*]. Now, now, don't get excited. It's only one night of the year, and their mischief is only Halloween fun.

MR. GROUCHER [*still angry*]. I'd like to give them some of their own mischief. I'd just like to get my hands on them! I'd duck them in the pond behind the house, that's what I'd do.

MRS. GROUCHER. No you wouldn't! I wouldn't let you.

MR. GROUCHER. I'd like to scare the daylights out of them. And that's just what I'm going to do. I'll teach them a lesson! [*Starts toward house.*] Just let them come around here. I'll scare them, and plenty.

MRS. GROUCHER [*going after him*]. What are you going to do?

MR. GROUCHER [*in front of door and turning to Mrs. GROUCHER*]. I want one of your sheets. I'll give them a Halloween scare they won't forget. I'll cure them of their pranks. [*Opens door and stands in the light of open doorway*]. Get me that sheet! I'll be ready for them.

[*Exit into house MR. and MRS. GROUCHER. The door closes, the lights in the house are turned off, and for a moment the stage is dark and quiet. Enter stealthily, GOBLINS from behind the corn shocks and from exits left and right. They run with quick little steps, peering left and right with sudden, little, stooping movements. ALL come forward in an informal group and sing to the first half the tune of "Pop Goes the Weasel":*]

Here we come, a goblin band,
Our mischief has no equal.
Old Groucher better mend his ways.
Whoooo! Watch the sequel!

Halloween is our own night,
The night we're out on mischief bent.
Groucher thinks he's best of all.
We'll be his punishment.

Halloween belongs to us.

Old Grouchy can't forget it.

And tricks are not for folks like him.

Whooo! He'll regret it.

[*The music of "Pop Goes the Weasel" continues in its entirety, as GOBLINS dance around the stage. The dance consists of three little running steps and a hop. This figure is repeated three times. Before the phrase, "Pop goes the weasel" is played, the music pauses, and the feet are brought together. Then the final phrase is played, and GOBLINS leap into the air, cry "Whooo," and land with knees bent. They rise to standing position as music ceases.*]

GOBLIN LEADER. Old Groucher is going to play a trick on the children, is he? He can't do that. Halloween pranks are for children and us. Just let him try it! We'll fix him!

GOBLINS [*in unison*]. Just let him try it! He! He! He! He! [*They scamper around the stage.*] He! He! He! He!

GOBLIN LEADER. Sh-h-h-h! I hear someone coming. Run and hide, all of you.

[*GOBLINS scamper behind the bench and the shocks of corn and hide. Enter right, very stealthily, ROGER and ANN. ROGER carries a lighted jack-o'-lantern.*]

ROGER [*whispering*]. Don't make a sound. We don't want old Groucher to hear us.

ANN. It's so dark, I can't see where I'm going.

ROGER. I'll go first, and you follow the jack-o'-lantern. Don't bump into anything. [*Comes forward, ANN following. Walks to corn shock, front right, and sets lantern on side nearest audience. ROGER and ANN squat beside it, well hidden from view of the house.*]

ANN. I don't like it here. People say this house is haunted.

ROGER. Just like a girl! Getting scared before we can play any tricks. I'm going to get my ticktack ready. [*Stands up and begins to fumble in his pockets.*]

ANN. What are you going to do with it?

ROGER [*unwinding cord*]. I'm going to fasten it to old Groucher's window. Then we'll hold the other end, and I'll rub it with a piece of rosin. It will make a terrible noise. It'll scare the life out of him. [*Gives ANN one end of the string and begins to walk toward the house in a crouching position.*]

ANN. Roger, let's not do it. His house is haunted.

ROGER. Sh-h-h-h! I'll be back in a minute. [*Fastens cord to hook at one side of window and returns to ANN.*]

ANN. It's too scary out here.

ROGER. Don't be like that. Where's that rosin? Here it is. All right, now. [*Holds cord taut and pretends to rub rosin on cord. Off stage a harsh, rasping sound is*

heard as SOUND EFFECTS OPERATOR draws rasp across edge of open cigar box several times.

The door opens, and GROUCHER, draped in a sheet, appears in the doorway. He advances with a swaying motion, arms extended. ROGER and ANN peer around the cornstalks. ANN jumps up, ROGER catches her dress, and both children fall in a heap. ANN screams, and ROGER clutches her in terror. The head of the GOBLIN LEADER appears above the back of the bench. He signals with a wave of his hand, and GOBLINS jump from their hiding places. They begin to frolic around GROUCHER, pulling at the sheet, pinching his arms, bumping into him, and pushing him. GROUCHER runs to the left, and, tripping over sheet, falls to stage.]

GOBLINS [leaping back and forth over the prostrate GROUCHER]. Whooo! Whooo! Wheee! Wheee! [In an eerie tone.]

GROUCHER [rising with difficulty]. Help! Help! Help!

[GOBLINS push him toward exit, left, and he begins to run. Exit GROUCHER, followed by GOBLINS. There is a pause, and then the sound of splashing water is heard off stage as the SOUND EFFECTS OPERATORS beat and slash at the water in the tubs with flat sticks.]

ANN [in terror]. What's happening?

GROUCHER [*off stage*]. Help! Help me! I'm drowning!

[*Lights are turned on behind window of house, door opens, and MRS. GROUCHER appears in doorway.*]

MRS. GROUCHER [*running about stage*]. Groucher! Where are you? Where are you?

[*Enter GROUCHER, left. He has changed into a mud-splashed, dripping sheet. His hair is wet. Comes to center stage and stands there dejectedly. CHILDREN peer around the corn shock and watch.*]

MRS. GROUCHER [*beside the dripping "Ghost"*]. Are you all right? Are you hurt? Speak to me.

[*GROUCHER raises his arms and drops them limply. Shakes his head. Opens and closes his mouth, then sobs and sighs.*]

MR. GROUCHER. I—I— Oh! Awful! [*Louder.*] Awful!

MRS. GROUCHER. What happened to you? [*GOBLINS enter from left, and crouching low, spread out across stage rear.*]

MR. GROUCHER [*in a loud wail*]. The goblins! They pushed me into the pond! Oh-h-h!

GOBLINS and CHILDREN [*shrieking with laughter*]. Ha! Ha! Ha!

THE AWFUL HALLOWEEN

TIME OF PLAYING: *About thirty minutes*

CHARACTERS

DAVE, *twenty years old*

MARGUERITE, *sixteen years old*

KATHLEEN, *fifteen years old*

CAROL, *fifteen years old*

JUDITH, *sixteen years old*

MAX, *twenty years old*

ROBERT, *fourteen years old*

MR. ASBURY

MRS. ASBURY

GRETCHEN ASBURY, *sixteen years old*

COSTUMES

MARGUERITE, KATHLEEN, CAROL, and JUDITH: *Ordinary clothes covered by draped sheets and pillowcases for ghost costumes.*

DAVE and MAX: *Old clothes, faces masked.*

MR. and MRS. ASBURY, and GRETCHEN: *Street clothes.*

ROBERT: *Ordinary clothing, badly rumpled.*

TIME: *Eight o'clock, Halloween.*

SCENE I

SCENE: *The old Asbury home, furnished but unoccupied for many years. The large living room has two doors, one in the center of the back wall, leading into the hall; the other in the center of the right wall, opening into a closet. A window is at left. In the corner at right is an old-fashioned fireplace, with an easy chair on each side. In the corner at left is a combination writing desk and bookcase, near which is a chair. A davenport stands along the left wall. Near the center of stage is a large library table with a comfortable chair on each side. A chair is at right front, and another at left front. There are several floor lamps, a number of pictures, and other decorations. The furniture is covered with white slip covers.*

At rise of curtain there is nobody on the stage, but almost immediately the rear door is thrown open and two struggling girls, MARGUERITE and KATHLEEN, draped in sheets, are forcibly pushed into the room. Enter DAVE behind them, masked.

DAVE. Well, here we are at last! Sit down and make yourselves comfortable, but remember, if either of you tries to escape, it will be bad for both of you. Get it?

MARGUERITE [*advancing slowly down stage, greatly frightened*]. But you have no right, mister. We—

DAVE. Right or no right, here's where you are, and here's where you stay until we let you go.

KATHLEEN [*moving forward with hesitating steps*]. We were on our way to a Halloween party. We ought to be there right now. What will our friends think?

DAVE. I don't know what they'll think, and I care less. Can't you get it through those dumb heads of yours that you are kidnaped? And I don't mean maybe. Put that in your pipes and smoke it.

MARGUERITE. We haven't any pipes.

DAVE. Don't go getting funny, miss. You may be sorry if you do.

MARGUERITE. I'm not trying to be funny. I'm scared.

KATHLEEN. How long are you going to keep us here?

DAVE. That depends on how you behave yourselves.

KATHLEEN. Our parents will be worried about us.

DAVE [*sarcastically*]. That will be just too bad, won't it?

MARGUERITE. They may think we've been killed or—

DAVE. Kidnaped? As soon as they come across with the ransom, they won't have to worry any more. Go over there and sit down in those comfortable chairs. You'll get good and tired if you stand around like dummies. Well, I'm going now.

MARGUERITE. When are you coming back?

DAVE. None of your business. I warn you not to try any monkeyshincs while I'm gone. You'll be sorry, if you do.

Good-by. [*Door shuts with a bang and retreating footsteps are heard off stage.*]

KATHLEEN [*pulls off her sheet and pillowcase and throws them onto nearest chair*]. There, that feels better! I was half smothered. Better take yours off, too, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE [*following her suggestion*]. Not a bad idea. We won't have any use for these things anyway. Well, what do you think about it, Kathleen?

KATHLEEN [*seating herself in chair at left of table*]. Think? I don't know how to think. My head's in a whirl. Oh, Marguerite, what shall we do?

MARGUERITE. Take it easy, Kathleen. There's no sense in getting all worked up.

KATHLEEN. How can you talk that way? I'm scared to death, aren't you?

MARGUERITE. I was excited when that man grabbed us and pushed us into his car and brought us here. But now it doesn't seem so bad.

KATHLEEN. But, Marguerite! *We've been kidnaped.*

MARGUERITE. We don't really know that we've been kidnaped.

KATHLEEN. He said we were. He talked about ransom and everything.

MARGUERITE. We don't know that he was telling the truth. [*Sits in chair at left of table.*]

KATHLEEN. He must have been. Or, why would he have grabbed us and brought us into this strange house?

MARGUERITE. How should I know?

KATHLEEN. He was the roughest man I ever saw. When I tried to scream in the car, he reached over and put his big hand across my mouth. Oh, Marguerite, I thought I'd die.

MARGUERITE. He wasn't very polite.

KATHLEEN. No, he wasn't any gentleman. I'll say that.

MARGUERITE. Kidnapers aren't gentlemen, as a rule.

KATHLEEN [*starting to rise*]. Are we just going to sit here?

MARGUERITE. We might as well.

KATHLEEN. Oh, Marguerite, how can you be so calm?

[*Begins pacing about.*]

MARGUERITE. Why not be game and see what happens?

KATHLEEN. What do you think *will* happen?

MARGUERITE. Don't forget that this is Halloween and almost anything can happen.

KATHLEEN. Oh, now I am beginning to understand you, Marguerite. You think this is a Halloween prank, don't you?

MARGUERITE. It could be.

KATHLEEN. Well, you're wrong. I don't see how you can doubt that man was a kidnaper. He was so rough, and—and terrifying.

MARGUERITE. He might have been putting on an act.

KATHLEEN. I wish I could think so.

MARGUERITE. It won't do any harm to pretend that it's a Halloween stunt. It will quiet our nerves.

KATHLEEN. I wish I could be as brave as you are.

MARGUERITE. Don't call me brave, Kathleen. I've been shaking like a leaf.

KATHLEEN. Really? Then you've just been trying to calm me down. You've succeeded in a way. I don't feel as jumpy as I did.

MARGUERITE. Good! [*Glances around the room.*] This is an interesting-looking room.

KATHLEEN. Interesting? I haven't even seen it.

MARGUERITE. Well, take a look.

KATHLEEN [*sniffing*]. It smells musty.

MARGUERITE. Yes, it is pretty stuffy. Evidently the place has been closed a long time. [*Rubs her finger across the table.*] Look at the dust.

KATHLEEN. My, this covered furniture is ghastly-looking!

MARGUERITE [*rises and walks slowly about*]. I wonder where the people are who used to live here?

KATHLEEN. They may be dead. Oh, Marguerite, this house might be haunted. What if we'd see a ghost!

MARGUERITE. I've always wanted to see one.

KATHLEEN. Don't say such things, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE. I was only kidding.

KATHLEEN. We must be a long way from home.

MARGUERITE. Oh, I don't know.

KATHLEEN. We were a long time getting here.

MARGUERITE. Maybe the man drove around in circles to make us think we were going a long distance. I've heard of kidnapers doing that.

KATHLEEN. I wonder if anybody has missed us yet?

MARGUERITE. I wouldn't know.

KATHLEEN. Everybody at the party will be wearing sheets and pillowcases so they won't know whether we are there or not.

MARGUERITE. That's so, and our parents won't be expecting us until late.

[Door bursts open and CAROL and JUDITH are pushed into the room by two masked men, MAX and DAVE.]

MAX. Now stay here with these other girls.

DAVE. Yes, and don't make any fuss about it, either.

MAX. If you cut any more capers like those you did on the way, you'll pay for 'em good and plenty.

KATHLEEN *[moving toward the door]*. Won't you please let us go, now? We've been here too long.

DAVE *[laughing]*. Say, Bill, did you get that? Says she's been here too long. Wants to go home to her mommy.

MARGUERITE. We were on our way to a Halloween party. We—are missing all the fun.

MAX. Don't let that worry you, young lady. You'll have fun right where you are.

CAROL. Have you girls been here a long time, Marguerite?

MARGUERITE. Long enough.

JUDITH. Those men said they were kidnaping us.

DAVE. Don't you believe it?

JUDITH. Y—yes, I do. Why did you do it?

MAX. Why do kidnapers usually kidnap kids?

JUDITH. For money.

DAVE. Right you are, little one, and we're going to make quite a haul this time.

KATHLEEN. But our fathers haven't much money.

MAX. They'll have less when we get through with them.

MAX. Come on, Pete. We'd better be on our way.

KATHLEEN. Are you coming back again?

MAX. That's our business.

MARGUERITE. You won't let us stay here 'till we starve, will you?

DAVE. That all depends upon how you act.

MARGUERITE. You are just horrid to leave us here by ourselves when all the rest of our friends are having a grand time at the Halloween party.

MAX. You want some of the eats they're having—cider and apples and cookies and doughnuts. Does that make your mouths water, little ones?

DAVE. Come on, fellow. Don't make 'em feel any worse.

MAX. O. K. But first, kids, I want to give you another warning. Don't try to get out of this room. You can't escape. You're locked in. So long, dearies! [*Exit MAX and DAVE.*]

KATHLEEN [*half crying*]. Aren't they contemptible? I hate them! I hate them!

MARGUERITE. You girls might as well take off your sheets and pillowcases.

KATHLEEN. Yes, we'd like to see who you are.

JUDITH. Haven't you any idea?

KATHLEEN. You sound like Judith.

MARGUERITE. And you sound like Carol.

[*GIRLS remove disguises, throwing the sheets and pillowcases on the davenport.*]

CAROL. You're good guessers. Oh, girls, how long have you been here?

KATHLEEN. It seems like a year.

JUDITH. So we are all kidnaped!

CAROL. Those awful men grabbed us just a few blocks from Marion's house.

JUDITH. You should have seen us kick and heard us scream when they dumped us into their car.

CAROL. After we quieted down we told them we were on our way to Marion Hampton's party, but they just laughed and said they weren't interested in parties.

KATHLEEN. The mean, horrible old things!

JUDITH. Have you girls tried to get out?

MARGUERITE. No, they warned us not to.

CAROL. Maybe we'll have to stay here all night.

KATHLEEN. And the next night and the next night, and we'll get hungrier and hungrier until we starve.

[Door opens suddenly and a large pumpkin rolls into the room.]

VOICE *[off stage]*. Eat that. *[Door closes.]*

[GIRLS exclaim ad lib.]

KATHLEEN *[runs over to pumpkin and picks it up]*.

How ridiculous! How do they expect us to eat this thing?

MARGUERITE. We might bang it around the room until it bursts open.

KATHLEEN *[throwing it down with all her might]*. There, take that, you hard old pumpkin!

CAROL *[bends over and examines it]*. You didn't even crack it, Kathleen.

JUDITH. What if we could break it open? We couldn't cook it. I never did like raw pumpkin.

MARGUERITE. We could make a fire in the fireplace.

KATHLEEN. How could we make a fire when we haven't anything to burn?

MARGUERITE [*crosses to bookcase*]. We could use some of these books. Here's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *A Child's History of England*. I never did like either one of them.

CAROL. That would be terrible to burn up good books, and besides we might set the house on fire, and burn up ourselves.

[*Door opens suddenly again and five or six red apples roll across the floor.*]

VOICE [*off stage*]. Don't try any funny business! Here are some apples. Eat these and keep still. [*Door closes.*]

[*Girls pick up apples excitedly.*]

KATHLEEN. That's more like it. We can eat these.

JUDITH [*tries to bite her apple*]. Why, this is as hard as—as I don't know what. I can't make a dent in it.

CAROL. I can't either.

MARGUERITE [*tries to bite her apple*]. What do you know? These are artificial apples.

KATHLEEN. Well, of all the mean, horrid things to do.

JUDITH. Better keep still, girls. They are evidently listening to what we say.

KATHLEEN. The cowards probably have their ears glued to the keyhole.

JUDITH. Hush, Kathleen. They might come in and murder us.

KATHLEEN. We might as well die one way as another.

They evidently intend to starve us to death.

VOICE [*off stage after door opens suddenly again*]. Oh, no we don't. [*A handful of navy beans is hurled into the room.*] Try these! [*Door closes.*]

CAROL. Well, look at that. Dry beans!

KATHLEEN. They are contemptible men! That's what they are. [*Scrambles about and picks up beans.*] If they open that door again, I'll hurl these right into their faces.

MARGUERITE. Don't be foolish, Kathleen. You'll get the worst of it, if you do.

CAROL. She's just talking.

JUDITH [*walking over to davenport*]. There's nothing to do but sit down and wait and see what happens.

CAROL [*going to chair at front left*]. Guess you're right, Judith. We're absolutely helpless. Were any of you girls ever kidnaped before?

GIRLS [*in chorus*]. Of course not.

MARGUERITE. It's really a thrilling experience. Think of all we'll have to tell our grandchildren.

KATHLEEN. Marguerite, stop talking that way. I haven't any grandchildren.

CAROL. I don't see how you can joke, Marguerite. Kidnaping is serious business.

MARGUERITE. I realize that, all right. I've been reading about that Chandler boy who was kidnaped a week ago.

JUDITH. So have I.

CAROL. They haven't found him yet.

KATHLEEN [*crossing to chair at right of table*]. Robert's father is very rich. Mr. Chandler is perfectly able to pay the fifty-thousand-dollar ransom the kidnapers are asking. He's had a notice in the paper several times but the kidnapers haven't come for the money yet, and they haven't heard a word from the boy.

CAROL. Let's talk about something else. I'm getting the jitters.

MARGUERITE. Let's talk about this house. It's an interesting-looking old place.

KATHLEEN. I think it's horrible, and I bet it's haunted, too.

CAROL. I wonder whose house it is.

JUDITH. It must be way out in the country. It took us a long time to get here.

KATHLEEN. Marguerite thinks they drove in circles to make us think they were taking us a long distance.

JUDITH. I hadn't thought of that, Kathleen.

MARGUERITE [*standing by the bookcase*]. Good! This bookcase isn't locked. How'd you all like to read a nice book?

CAROL. My hands are shaking so I couldn't hold one.

MARGUERITE [*taking out a book and opening it*]. Oh, girls, I believe I've made a discovery. We are in the old Asbury house, and we're not far from home at all.

JUDITH. Why do you think so, Marguerite?

MARGUERITE. Come here and see for yourselves.

[GIRLS *jump up and crowd around* MARGUERITE.]

KATHLEEN. What did you discover?

CAROL. Hurry and tell us.

MARGUERITE. The name, A. J. Asbury, is on the book-plate. See? [*Holds it up.*]

JUDITH. The book may be borrowed.

MARGUERITE. Let's examine some of the others.

DEEP VOICE [*off stage*]. Let those books alone!

KATHLEEN. Oh, girls. Did you hear that?

CAROL. How could we help it? Quick, put the books back!
Let's all sit down again.

[GIRLS *resume their seats.*]

MARGUERITE. I wish that old eavesdropper would go jump in the lake.

CAROL. Hush, Marguerite! He'll hear you.

JUDITH [*in stage whisper*]. Do you suppose he's one of the kidnapers?

CAROL. Who else would he be, Carol?

KATHLEEN. He might be a ghost.

[*Lights go out, leaving stage in total darkness. GIRLS scream. In a few seconds the lights come on. A tall*

figure wearing a black robe and mask stands in the center of the room.]

BLACK FIGURE [*speaking in strange hollow voice, as he raises his arms slowly*]. I am a ghost!

[*Girls look terrified.*]

CAROL. Oh, please don't hurt us.

GHOST. Why are you here in my house?

JUDITH [*in trembling voice*]. We—we were brought here by some kidnapers.

GHOST. Kidnapers? Do you expect me to believe that?

CAROL. It's the truth.

GHOST. A likely story. Now if you know what's good for you, get out of here at once. This is my house, I tell you. I am the ghost of Mr. Asbury. I don't want any Halloween pranks going on here. What's more, I won't have it. [*Stamps foot and pounds on table.*]

KATHLEEN. We don't want to stay here, but we can't get out.

JUDITH. We are locked in.

GHOST. Nonsense. Now I'll give you just three minutes to leave *my* house. [*Lights go out and in a few seconds come on again. The GHOST has vanished.*]

MARGUERITE. Oh, girls, he has disappeared.

KATHLEEN. Honestly, I am all in. We'd better go at once.

JUDITH. Yes, I'd hate to have him come back.

CAROL. This house has always had the reputation of being haunted.

KATHLEEN. And to think we have actually seen Mr. Asbury's ghost.

MARGUERITE. I didn't know that he was dead.

CAROL. He—he must have died while he was away. The Asburys have been gone a long time, Mother said.

KATHLEEN. Well, let's not waste time talking. We'd better go.

CAROL. But those men said we were locked in.

MARGUERITE. Perhaps the ghost unlocked the door. I hope he did. I'm going to see. [*Crosses to door and tries knob.*] It's locked all right.

KATHLEEN [*in wailing voice*]. Now what shall we do?

JUDITH. We can't do anything, Kathleen, but—but just wait until the kidnapers come back.

CAROL. Or the ghost.

MARGUERITE. Let's not talk about the ghost any more, Carol. Perhaps—perhaps we just imagined we saw him. I really don't believe there is such a thing as a black ghost.

[*Knock is heard off stage.*]

KATHLEEN [*in frightened voice*]. Girls, I heard a noise. What was it?

CAROL. I heard it, too. It sounded like a knock.

MARGUERITE [*crossing to davenport*]. I didn't hear anything. Come on. Let's all sit down and be calm.

KATHLEEN [*seating herself on the davenport*]. We can sit down, but we can't promise to be calm, Marguerite.

CAROL [*seating herself at right of table*]. I don't know whom I'm more afraid of, the kidnapers or the ghost.

JUDITH [*seating herself at left of table*]. I'm more scared of the kidnapers. Ghosts never hurt anybody. They just give you the creeps.

MARGUERITE. One good thing, we aren't far from home. The Asbury house is on a hill only about ten blocks from our house.

[*Distinct knock is heard.*]

KATHLEEN [*raising her hand*]. Listen! There's that knock again! Did you hear it?

CAROL. How could we help it? [*Crosses to chair down left. Indicates closet door.*]

JUDITH. Listen! I thought I heard somebody moaning.

MARGUERITE. You girls are nuts.

JUDITH. But, Marguerite, I *did* hear it! Cross my heart, and hope to die. [*Crosses her heart.*]

MARGUERITE. It was probably the wind, rattling the shutters or loose boards, Judith.

KATHLEEN [*jumping up excitedly*]. There's a note or some-

thing on the floor. [*Picks up envelope.*] It's addressed to Mr. H. K. Curtis. Why, that's your father, Judith. JUDITH. Here, let me see it, Kathleen. [*Moves toward KATHLEEN.*]

KATHLEEN [*handing the note to JUDITH*]. Open it and read it to us, Judith.

MARGUERITE. Open it and read it anyway, Judith. It's probably something important.

CAROL. Yes, the kidnapers must have dropped it.

JUDITH. Or the ghost.

CAROL. Ghosts don't write letters.

KATHLEEN. Stop arguing, girls. Please read it, Judith. Your father won't care. I know it's something that concerns us.

ROBERT [*off stage*]. Let me out! Please let me out! I'm smothering. Open the door quick. I can't stand it in here another minute. [*Loud pounding on closet door.*]

CAROL [*jumping up*]. That sounded like a boy. It came from that door over there. [*Moves toward closet door.*]

KATHLEEN. Yes, it did.

MARGUERITE. Open it quick, Carol.

CAROL [*turning knob*]. I can't. The door's locked.

JUDITH. Hunt around for the key, someone.

CAROL. Oh, this is awful!

SCENE II

SCENE: *Same as SCENE I. When the curtain rises the girls are standing near the closet door, all talking ad lib.*

KATHLEEN. We're sorry, but we can't let you out.

MARGUERITE. The door is locked and we can't find the key.

CAROL. What? What did you say? Keep still, everybody. He's trying to talk. His voice is terribly weak. [*Puts her ear close to crack in door.*] Listen, listen! He says he's been kidnaped. . . . What? What did you say? Talk louder. I can't hear you. What about the key? Yes, yes, we'll look for it. We'll open the door the minute we find it. Girls, scam! Look everywhere.

[*GIRLS move quickly about stage, searching everywhere.*]

KATHLEEN [*standing helplessly in center of stage*]. Girls, this is terrible. The key isn't in this room. The kidnapers must have taken it with them. What shall we do?

CAROL. Maybe we can knock the door down. [*Picks up a chair.*] I'm going to try.

MARGUERITE. Don't be silly, Carol. We couldn't make a dent. Besides we mustn't break up Mr. Asbury's house.

KATHLEEN. He—he won't like it.

JUDITH [*joyously*]. Oh, girls! I've found it! [*Holds up key which she has taken from fireplace.*]

MARGUERITE. Where did you find it, Judith?

JUDITH [*hurrying toward closet door*]. It was lying under the grate in the fireplace. [*Pushing girls aside.*] Get out of the way. We must hurry and let him out, poor child.

KATHLEEN. I only hope it's the right key.

JUDITH [*almost screaming*]. It is! Oh, girls, the door is opening. Come out, little boy, or big boy, or whoever you are.

ROBERT [*emerging from closet in dazed manner, rubbing his eyes*]. Oh, thanks. Thanks a lot. It was suffocating in there. [*Looks curiously at GIRLS.*] Who are you? Where did you all come from?

KATHLEEN. We've been kidnaped. We're all locked in this room.

ROBERT [*in astonishment*]. Honest Injun? I'm kidnaped, too.

KATHLEEN. Who are you? I mean, what is your name?

ROBERT. Robert—Robert Chandler.

GIRLS [*in chorus*]. Robert Chandler!

JUDITH. How long have you been here in this house?

ROBERT. I—I don't know—I—

MARGUERITE [*taking him by the arm and leading him*

toward the davenport]. Come and sit down, Robert. Girls, don't fire so many questions at him. Can't you see he is all in?

ROBERT. I'm all right. I feel better now. [*Sits down on davenport with MARGUERITE.*] Boy, I'm glad to be out here where I can breathe better. It was awfully hot in that closet.

JUDITH. I can imagine.

CAROL. We've read a lot about you in the papers lately. Have you been in this house all the time since they kidnaped you?

ROBERT. No. I spent several days and nights in the woods in an old shack. I don't know where it was. I like it here lots better. I've been here about three days and three nights, I guess.

MARGUERITE. But not in that closet all the time?

ROBERT. Oh, no, of course not. I was in there only a few hours. They caught me trying to escape and shoved me in there. I battered the door a while and then finally I gave up, and I guess I went to sleep. Then I woke up and heard your voices.

MARGUERITE. We're glad we found you, Robert.

ROBERT. So'm I! Thanks again for letting me out. . . . How long have you all been here?

KATHLEEN. It seems ages, but I don't believe it's more than an hour. [*Sits in chair at right of table.*]

CAROL. We were on our way to a Halloween party and some horrid men grabbed us and brought us here. [*Sits in chair by bookcase.*]

JUDITH. Robert, tell us. Have you seen any ghosts since you've been here? [*Sits herself down left.*]

ROBERT [*grinning*]. Of course not. I don't believe in ghosts.

KATHLEEN. But we saw one, right in this room.

MARGUERITE. Kathleen, keep still. What's the use of scaring him?

KATHLEEN. That's so. I shouldn't have said anything.

ROBERT. She can't scare me. I'm used to most anything now.

MARGUERITE. Let's change the subject. Judith, you haven't read your father's note yet.

JUDITH. Oh, I forgot all about it. [*Tears envelope open and glances at paper.*] Listen to this, girls. It says:

Mr. Curtis: Your girl has been kidnaped. We are holding her for ransom. If she is worth twenty thousand dollars to you, O. K. Leave the cash (no marked bills, understand) in a tin box by the third tree around the second turn of Elm Road. Mind you don't squeal on us. If you do, there's no telling what will happen to your kid.

TWO BUSINESS MEN.

KATHLEEN. Then we really are kidnaped.

CAROL. Did it just dawn on you, Kathleen?

KATHLEEN. No, but that note is positive proof.

MARGUERITE. Do you suppose all our fathers received notes like that?

JUDITH. I wouldn't know.

MARGUERITE. It's written in good English. I wonder which one of the men wrote it?

CAROL. What difference does that make?

ROBERT. They aren't asking as much ransom as they did from my father.

JUDITH. They probably know my father hasn't as much money as yours.

CAROL. Your father ought to have that note right away, Judith.

JUDITH. But how can I get it to him?

MARGUERITE. Better run down the hill and give it to him, Judith.

JUDITH. I wish I could!

ROBERT. I wish I could deliver it for you.

KATHLEEN. We might drop you out the window.

CAROL [*rising and crossing to window*]. That's an idea. I'm going to see if the window is really locked.

ROBERT [*in alarm*]. Better not go near that window. I was trying to open it when they discovered what I was doing and threw me into that awful closet.

CAROL [*fumbling with lock on the window*]. I can't budge it. [*Returns to her seat.*] Oh, dear, I guess there's nothing to do but sit here and wait.

ROBERT. It's a lot jollier having you girls here than being all by myself. Was I lonesome!

JUDITH. Haven't you had anything to eat since you've been kidnaped, Robert?

ROBERT. Sure I have. They gave me buns and oranges and hot dogs and some other things. At first, I was too scared to eat; then I got so hungry I ate every crumb. [*Points to apples on tables.*] Oh, look at those apples over there. Why don't you eat them? May I have one?

MARGUERITE [*with a sly twinkle*]. Help yourself, Robert.

ROBERT [*picking up an apple*]. Thanks. Don't mind if I do. [*Girls all watch with amusement.*] Say, what's the matter with this thing? It's—it's a phoney apple!

KATHLEEN [*laughing*]. Don't you like it?

ROBERT. I'll say I don't. Where did you get 'em?

JUDITH. The kidnapers tossed them into the room, also that pumpkin over there, and those dry beans.

ROBERT. Is that all they've given you to eat?

MARGUERITE. Yes, but we're not hungry yet.

CAROL. Speak for yourself, Marguerite. I'm about starved.

[*Sound of footsteps overhead.*]

KATHLEEN. Somebody's walking around upstairs.

[*All sit in listening attitude. Sound of steps again.*]

ROBERT. As sure as anything!

CAROL. Oh, girls, do you suppose it's the black ghost again?

ROBERT. Stop kidding! It's really somebody up there.

MARGUERITE. It may be the wind rattling things.

KATHLEEN. It could be, of course, but it sounded just like steps.

[*The chair at left begins to move slowly to back of stage. This may be done by having a rope attached to it, close to the floor.*]

JUDITH [*screams*]. Look! That chair is moving! [*Chair stops half-way upstage.*] And there's nobody near it.

MARGUERITE. You're goofy, Judith.

ROBERT. No, she isn't. I saw it, too.

MARGUERITE. But how could it move by itself?

CAROL. Because this house is haunted. Didn't we see a ghost?

ROBERT. I can believe most anything now.

KATHLEEN [*in trembling voice*]. Let's—let's talk about something else. I'm getting the jitters again.

JUDITH. Oh, dear, I wish I were home.

CAROL. That's what we all wish.

MARGUERITE. I'd rather be at Marion's party.

JUDITH. I'd almost forgotten about the party.

[*Noise is heard off stage.*]

KATHLEEN [*raising her hand*]. There's another noise!

JUDITH. I heard it, too.

ROBERT. So did I.

CAROL. It was right out there in the hall. I'm sure it was.

ROBERT. I bet the kidnapers are coming back.

[*A door creaks loudly. Then distinct footsteps are heard.*]

JUDITH. They are coming. [*Rises and looks wildly toward the door.*] Now what shall we do?

KATHLEEN [*jumping up*]. Yes, what shall we do? They may be coming to kill us.

MARGUERITE. Don't be silly, Kathleen. [*Others start to rise.*] Sit down, everybody, and act as if you weren't a bit scared.

KATHLEEN. I'm going to hide. [*Hurries toward closet.*] In this closet.

CAROL. Don't shut the door! I'm coming with you, Kathleen.

MARGUERITE. So am I.

KATHLEEN. All right, but we can't all get in here. There, shut the door, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE. O. K. [*Door slams.*]

JUDITH [*looking at ROBERT*]. That leaves us out. What shall we do?

ROBERT. We can crawl under the davenport. Come on. You go first.

JUDITH [*disappearing under davenport*]. I'll get close to the wall.

[*Door opens slowly. Enter MR. and MRS. ASBURY and GRETCHEN.*]

MR. ASBURY [*advancing toward center stage*]. It's queer that door was locked, also that this room is lighted.

MRS. ASBURY [*following her husband*]. Yes, isn't it? I'm glad the key was left in the lock.

MR. ASBURY [*taking quick survey of room*]. Everything looks just the same as when we went away.

MRS. ASBURY. How did you expect it to look?

MR. ASBURY. Oh, I don't know.

MRS. ASBURY. These white coverings give the place a ghastly look. It will seem more like home after we take them off. My, how the memories come rushing back!

GRETCHEN [*walking down stage slowly and looking curiously at everything*]. I don't remember anything about this house. It seems strange that I used to live here.

MR. ASBURY. Well, you did, Gretchen, but it's no wonder you don't remember the place. You were only two when we went away, and now you're almost sixteen.

MRS. ASBURY [*sitting in chair at right of table and breathing a contented sigh*]. You don't know how glad I am to be back, Herbert. I've had many a homesick cry, thinking of this dear old home. I always loved it.

MR. ASBURY. So did I.

GRETCHEN [*seating herself in chair down left*]. Then, why did you go away, Dad?

MR. ASBURY [*sitting at left of table*]. Business reasons, my dear. Business reasons.

GRETCHEN [*sadly*]. It seems like a dreadfully lonesome place to live.

MR. ASBURY. No doubt you do feel that way, Toots, but you'll soon get acquainted. Think what a nice big house it will be to entertain your friends in.

GRETCHEN. If I ever have any.

MR. ASBURY. Oh, this town is a very friendly place, as I remember it.

MRS. ASBURY. My, it's terribly close in here. You'd better open the window, Herbert.

MR. ASBURY. Not a bad idea. [*Goes to window and works with lock.*] H'm, no wonder I can't open it. Somebody's nailed it shut. That's funny! We didn't leave it that way.

MRS. ASBURY. No, I'm sure we didn't.

[*A noise is heard off stage.*]

GRETCHEN [*walking over to table*]. I heard something, Mother.

MRS. ASBURY. I thought I did, too, Gretchen.

MR. ASBURY [*resuming his seat*]. I can't get that window open without a hammer.

MRS. ASBURY. Oh, well, never mind, dear. We'll soon be going up to bed.

GRETCHEN [*anxiously*]. Dad, we heard a noise.

MR. ASBURY. Don't look so worried. There's nobody in the house except Hannah and us. You probably heard her moving about upstairs getting the rooms ready for us.

GRETCHEN. But it sounded as if it were down here. It seemed to come from that closet. [*Points.*]

MR. ASBURY. You're letting your imagination work overtime, my dear.

GRETCHEN. But, Dad, I heard something. Really, I did.

MRS. ASBURY. I thought I did too, Herbert.

MR. ASBURY [*rising*]. It won't take long to investigate. [*Throws open closet door. Then steps back in astonishment.*] Forevermore! Three girls! What in the world are you doing in there? Where did you come from and who are you? Come on out!

[*Girls come out, looking frightened.*]

CAROL. You—you aren't another kidnaper, are you?

MR. ASBURY [*puzzled*]. A kidnaper? What are you talking about? Of course I'm not. What were you doing in that closet?

MRS. ASBURY. Herbert, you are frightening them. Sit down, girls, and tell us why you are here in our house.

[*GIRLS sit down.*]

MR. ASBURY. Now what's it all about? You haven't answered any of my questions.

MARGUERITE. We were hiding.

KATHLEEN. We've been kidnaped. Two masked men brought us here and locked us in.

CAROL. And when we heard you coming, we thought it was the kidnappers coming back, and so we all hid in the closet.

MR. ASBURY. This is the most fantastic story I ever heard.

GRETCHEN. It's thrilling!

MR. ASBURY. How long have you been here? A day, two days, a week?

MARGUERITE. We just came this evening.

CAROL. We've been terribly scared.

MRS. ASBURY [*sympathetically*]. No wonder!

MARGUERITE. Won't you please tell us who you are? We'd really like to know.

MR. ASBURY. I am Mr. Asbury, and this is my wife, and that's my daughter, Gretchen.

KATHLEEN. But you can't be Mr. Asbury.

MR. ASBURY. Why can't I?

KATHLEEN. Because—we saw his ghost.

CAROL. Yes, we did. He was a black ghost. I mean he was all draped in black.

MR. ASBURY [to MRS. ASBURY]. They are out of their heads.

MRS. ASBURY. No wonder! The poor darlings are frightened half to death. You can see that.

KATHLEEN. We aren't goofy. We are telling you the truth. We did see a ghost, and he said his name was Mr. Asbury.

MARGUERITE [*glancing about the room*]. I wonder where the others are?

MR. ASBURY. Others?

CAROL. There were two more of us, but I don't know what has become of them.

[ROBERT and JUDITH roll out from beneath the davenport and scramble to their feet.]

ROBERT. Here we are! Wow, it was stuffy under there.

MR. ASBURY. Well, can you beat that? Any more hidden around anywhere?

JUDITH. No, that's all.

[ROBERT and JUDITH seat themselves on davenport.]

GRETCHEN. It's just like a surprise party.

MARGUERITE. You really are Mr. Asbury, aren't you?

MR. ASBURY. Of course I am.

KATHLEEN. Then who do you suppose the ghost could have been?

JUDITH. I bet I know. It was probably one of the kidnapers trying to scare us.

GRETCHEN. Listen! I hear somebody coming!

[Noise is heard off stage.]

MRS. ASBURY. It's probably Hannah coming to tell us our rooms are ready for us.

ROBERT *[alarmed]*. It's most likely the kidnapers coming back.

MRS. ASBURY. Now, Herbert, if it should be, don't do anything rash. Remember, they are desperate men.

[DAVE and MAX enter at rear, both wearing masks. They stand still, trying to grasp the situation.]

DAVE. Well, where did all these people come from?

MAX. Quite a party.

MR. ASBURY *[standing and facing them]*. Stay right where you are. Don't take another step or you'll regret it. *[He turns to GIRLS.]* Are these the men who brought you here?

GIRLS *[in chorus]*. Yes, they are.

ROBERT. They aren't the fellows that brought *me* here.

One was big and sort of fat, and the other was tall and thin.

MR. ASBURY. H'm. The woods must be full of kidnapers.

MARGUERITE. Boys, this thing has gone far enough. You'd better take off your masks and explain who you really are.

[DAVE and MAX *jerk off their masks and stand grinning sheepishly.* GIRLS *all gasp in surprise.*]

CAROL. Of all things!

KATHLEEN. Why, it's Dave Bronson and Max Whitman.

MR. ASBURY. So you know them?

JUDITH. Yes, of course. They are friends of ours.

MAX. Just a little Halloween prank.

CAROL. You had us completely fooled. We never dreamed it was you. Why, you changed your voices and everything.

MARGUERITE. I knew who they were. I knew it all the time.

DAVE. Yes, we let Marguerite in on the joke.

KATHLEEN. I call that a mean trick.

CAROL. No wonder you were so brave, Marguerite.

JUDITH. And so calm.

MR. ASBURY. Well, boys, I think you carried your prank a little too far. It might have ended seriously.

MAX. We knew Marguerite wouldn't let the girls get too scared. But say, who are you people? [*Looks at the ASBURYS and ROBERT.*] I never saw any of you before.

MARGUERITE. These people used to live here, Max. They are Mr. and Mrs. Asbury and their daughter, Gretchen.

MAX [*bowing*]. Pleased to meet you. [*Looks at ROBERT.*] And who's the kid?

CAROL. That's Robert Chandler, the boy who was kidnaped.

DAVE. Not really?

MAX. She's stringing us, Dave.

ROBERT. No, she isn't. I *am* Robert Chandler. I was here in the house when you brought the girls. I was locked in the closet.

MAX. Well, can you beat that?

JUDITH [*excitedly*]. I bet one of you boys was the black ghost trying to scare us.

DAVE. Right you are, Judith. I'm guilty.

KATHLEEN [*aside*]. Horrid thing!

MR. ASBURY [*addressing MAX and DAVE*]. Say, how did you fellows get into our house, anyway?

MAX. Oh, we found the basement door open one day when we were prowling around, and we came in.

MR. ASBURY. And decided it was an ideal place for your Halloween stunt?

MAX. That's the way it was, sir.

MR. ASBURY [*rising*]. We're wasting a lot of valuable time. I'm worried about this boy. I think I'll go in search of a telephone and notify the police. I don't want to become involved in a kidnaping case. Come on, Robert, I'd better take you home first.

MRS. ASBURY. Yes, Herbert, his parents must be worried to death.

DAVE. Can't you let him stay a little while longer, Mr. Asbury? It's like this. We're having a Halloween party here tonight. We've got a lot of food out there in the hall—cider and doughnuts and apples and all the other trimmings.

MAX. Dave, you'd better ask Mr. and Mrs. Asbury's permission to have the party. They might have a few objections.

GRETCHEN. Oh, Dad, please let them.

MRS. ASBURY. Yes, of course we'll let them.

MR. ASBURY. Sure. Go ahead. But it's rather a small party, isn't it?

MAX. Oh, there's a bunch of other kids waiting outside for the signal. You're swell, Mr. and Mrs. Asbury, to let us stay. Thanks a lot.

MR. ASBURY. Don't mention it. I wouldn't think of throwing cold water on such a well-planned Halloween party. How about it, Robert? Do you want to be a guest, or would you rather go home at once?

ROBERT [*grinning*]. I'm not in such an awful rush. Besides, I'm kind of hungry. I could use a few doughnuts and apples—if they're not made of rubber. [GIRLS *laugh*.]

GRETCHEN. Oh, Dad, I think it's wonderful to have a party the first night I'm home. It will be a real housewarming. I thought I was going to be lonesome, but with all these new friends I won't be at all.

KATHLEEN. It's not such an awful Halloween after all.

ROBERT. Awful? I think it's swell.

GIRLS [*in chorus*]. So do we!

CURTAIN

HALLOWEEN MAGIC

TIME OF PLAYING: *About fifteen minutes*

CHARACTERS

SUE, *twelve years old*

JEAN, *twelve years old*

OLD WOMAN, *with the aspect and voice of a witch*

GHOST, *a tall child*

COSTUMES

SUE and JEAN: *Clothing suitable for school.*

OLD WOMAN: *A long, black dress. A black shawl around her shoulders. Hair whitened with powder, hanging in straight wisps around her face. Her face should be lined with a black pencil to show age.*

GHOST: *Draped sheet. Face whitened with powder.*

TIME: *Late afternoon on Halloween.*

SCENE: *The front porch of SUE's house. At left front, a bench large enough for two people to sit on. Near it, two wicker chairs. Potted plants on table, right rear. At right front of stage, a table with a lighted lamp. Center rear, an exit arranged to look like the porch steps. Stage dimly lighted, as action takes place at dusk. During last few minutes of the play*

the stage should be darkened still more by turning off a light or two.

As the curtain rises, SUE is seated on the porch bench, cutting a black cat out of crepe paper. Near her on the seat are two or three medium-sized boxes.

SUE. Oh, dear, will I ever get through? Seems as if I've cut out a million of these crazy cats. I always get the last minute jobs to do. I don't see any sense to Halloween anyway. [*Steps are heard off stage. SUE calls out without rising.*] I'm here on the porch, Jean. Come on up.

[*JEAN enters, carrying a large box.*]

JEAN. Aren't you finished yet, Sue?

SUE. Not quite. Here's an extra pair of scissors. Won't you help me?

[*JEAN takes scissors, sets box on floor, seats herself on chair near the bench, and begins to cut out the cats.*]

JEAN. Okay, but we should hurry. We'll have to put these things up after we get to school.

SUE [*irritated*]. I know, I know. I hate to rush. I'm disgusted with this Halloween entertainment. We're too big to believe superstitions.

JEAN. Well, why did you vote for a Halloween party if you didn't want it?

SUE. Oh, I don't know. Just to be doing something, I guess. You voted for it, too.

JEAN. Sure I did. I like Halloween. I kinda believe in it.

SUE. [*sneeringly*]. Don't be so stupid.

[*JEAN lays her scissors down, gets to her feet, and puts her hands on her hips.*]

JEAN [*angrily*]. I'm not stupid, and if you think I am, you can just finish your old cats by yourself!

SUS. Oh, come on, Jean. I didn't mean you were that kind of stupid. Let's forget it.

JEAN [*sitting down*]. Well, I don't care what you think, but I don't want any black cats crossing my path, and I wouldn't think of looking at a new moon over my left shoulder.

SUE [*in amazement*]. For goodness' sakes, why not?

JEAN. Brings you bad luck, that's why.

SUE [*gathering up cutouts and putting them in box*].

Well, if that's the way you feel, we better get started for the school before it gets pitch dark, or you'll be too scared to go.

JEAN. I'm not afraid, really I'm not, only my brother declares he saw a ghost one time.

[*GIRLS finish packing the cutouts into boxes. They start toward exit at rear of stage.*]

SUE. Next thing you'll be telling me somebody you knew saw a witch. I wonder where we ever got the idea for Halloween, anyway.

[*GIRLS are close to rear of stage when the OLD WOMAN appears.*]

JEAN [*startled*]. Oh—h—h! [*She and SUE step to center of stage, as the OLD WOMAN comes forward.*]

OLD WOMAN. Maybe I can tell you about Halloween.

SUE. Who are you, and where did you come from?

OLD WOMAN [*at center of stage*]. Don't be frightened.

I was just passing by and heard you talking. I am tired. May I sit down?

SUE [*more composed*]. Yes, certainly. Do sit down.

OLD WOMAN [*sitting down in chair at right and sighing loudly*]. Ah—h—h, thank you. [*Pauses, as SUE takes previous place on bench. JEAN sits on chair nearer to back of stage.*] So you were wondering who ever thought up Halloween, eh?

JEAN. Well,—er—yes, we were.

OLD WOMAN [*smiling queerly*]. That isn't so strange. Lots of people wonder that— and [*mysteriously*] a few—
know.

JEAN [*excitedly*]. Do you know? Do you? [*Leans toward the OLD WOMAN expectantly. SUE shakes her head and fumbles with the boxes, in a disgusted way.*]

OLD WOMAN. No, I can't rightly say that I do. But I know why we have it.

SUE [*very bored*]. I suppose everyone knows why we have it. All Saints' Day or something like that. Some people even think that the ghosts walk tonight. [*While she is talking, GHOST enters from right and stands behind the OLD WOMAN. SUE sees GHOST, just as she finishes her speech. She partially rises from her chair, claps her hand over her mouth as GHOST makes upward and outward motion with hands and backs off stage. SUE is the only one who sees GHOST. She seats herself, but every now and then she looks toward spot where GHOST appeared.*]

OLD WOMAN [*to SUE*]. Old superstitions, you don't believe in them, do you?

SUE [*trying to be calm*]. Certainly not.

OLD WOMAN. Perhaps you are right. But do you know that centuries ago people in the old world thought that their loved ones who were dead returned to them on the first day of November?

SUE. No, I didn't know it. I think it's silly.

[*JEAN has her elbows propped on her knees, and her chin is resting in her cupped hands. She is looking intently at the OLD WOMAN.*]

OLD WOMAN. Silly? They didn't think so. In fact, they believed it so strongly that they prepared a feast for them

the night before. They called it the Feast of the Dead—on Holy Evening.

JEAN [*pulling her chair up closer to SUE*]. Holy Evening!

Why that must be where we get the word Halloween—from Holy Evening. Oh, I like that.

OLD WOMAN. Yes, that is the reason we call it Halloween.

SUE. It is just a myth, but it is interesting.

JEAN. What else do you know about Halloween?

OLD WOMAN. Haven't you ever heard that in Ireland they make a special dish for Holy Evening? [*GIRLS shake their heads as the OLD WOMAN continues, counting on her fingers.*] Yes, they put three things in it, potatoes, fish, and parsnips. Before it is cooked, a ring is hidden in the dish, and whoever finds the ring is sure to have very, very good luck.

SUE. That's a strange custom. What else do they do?

OLD WOMAN. Well, of course, you won't believe it, but they do tell that the old Dutch housewives were extremely afraid of witches.

[*Off stage is heard the hoot of an owl. SUE jumps up and speaks quickly.*]

SUE. What on earth is that? [*Looks up and around as if trying to discover where the sound came from.*]

OLD WOMAN [*speaking rather eerily*]. Sit down, my dear. It's just my friend, the owl. He can't hurt you.

SUE [*trying to cover up her nervousness*]. Of course, I knew all the time what it was.

JEAN [*to OLD WOMAN*]. Oh, yes, Sue, knew what it was—she says. Now go on about the old Dutch housewives. [*She moves her chair nearer to SUE.*]

OLD WOMAN. As I was saying, they were so afraid of the witches that they finally discovered how to find out who was and who wasn't a witch.

SUE [*showing interest*]. Did they really?

OLD WOMAN. Yes. They would put a live chicken in a pot and pour boiling water over it. Whoever passed their door while the chicken was squawking was sure to be a witch.

SUE. Oh, boy! I bet people stayed away from a person like that, didn't they?

JEAN [*smirking at SUE*]. I thought you weren't superstitious, Sue.

SUE. I'm not, but this is thrilling.

OLD WOMAN. Listen! [*She cocks her head, listening.*]

SUE. I don't hear a thing.

JEAN. Neither do I.

[OLD WOMAN, *half risen from her chair, is listening intently. Off stage a faint rustling is heard, loud enough for the audience to hear. GIRLS look around, but seem not to hear the sound.*]

OLD WOMAN. I hear something. [*Sighs and sits down.*]
I know just what it is. It's the people hiding in the corn fields, waiting to hear what the ghosts have to say.

[*JEAN moves to the seat beside SUE.*]

SUE. I still don't hear anything. Why would people want to hear a ghost [*shudders*] talk, even if they could?

OLD WOMAN. The ghost always tells you what will happen to you in the year to come.

[*SUE moves toward the end of the bench. In doing so she accidentally pushes the boxes off. JEAN jumps up at the noise and screams. SUE pulls her back to the bench.*]

SUE. Sit down, Jean. What are you yelling for? I just pushed a box over.

JEAN [*trying to laugh*]. Oh, but that scared me!

SUE. You're nothing but a fraidy cat.

OLD WOMAN [*chuckling*]. There's one more thing. The walnut tree is the meeting place for the witches, and any girl who is not afraid to walk around the walnut tree is sure to see the man she is going to marry.

[*GIRLS laugh easily. OLD WOMAN rises and starts toward exit. GIRLS spring to their feet.*]

JEAN. Oh, don't go. This is such fun.

SUE. Yes, please stay a while longer. I am just beginning to be interested.

OLD WOMAN [*near exit*]. I am late now, and I must go before the moon rises.

JEAN. Why must you go? You've never even told us who you are!

SUE. No, you haven't. Where are you going?

[OLD WOMAN *has reached exit, and, as she begins her last speech, she reaches off stage, presumably by porch steps, and picks up a witch's hat and broom.*]

OLD WOMAN. You want to know who I am? Well, I am the witch that you might meet down by the walnut tree. Do you want to know where I'm going? I'm going to climb upon my broomstick and ride to the Feast of the Dead!

[*She laughs shrilly, straddles broomstick, and makes a rapid exit. GIRLS look at each other wildly, scamper across stage, and stare in direction WITCH has gone.*]

CURTAIN

HOCUS-POCUS HALLOWEEN

TIME OF PLAYING: *About fifteen minutes*

CHARACTERS

SHERIFF, *a stoop-shouldered old man*

SPIRIT OF FUN, *a girl*

THREE WITCHES

THREE GHOSTS

THREE JACK-O'-LANTERNS

THREE SKELETONS

THREE BLACK CATS

THREE OWLS

SIX CHILDREN

COSTUMES

SHERIFF: *Long trousers. Dark coat. Carries a lantern, and several keys on large brass ring.*

SPIRIT OF FUN: *Typical court jester's suit. Carries portable record player.*

WITCHES: *Black robes and pointed caps. FIRST WITCH carries black kettle, or caldron. SECOND WITCH carries tripod for caldron. THIRD WITCH has an old broomstick.*

GHOSTS: *Two yardsticks held upright in each hand of the GHOSTS, and covered with a pillow-case on which*

is painted a face to make the head. The bottom of the case is gathered around the neck and fastened with a tie. A boy's coat with gloves fastened to the cuffs and with sleeves stuffed is hung from the shoulders of each ghost. A checkbook protrudes from pocket of SECOND GHOST.

JACK-O'-LANTERNS: Long black robes covering head and body, with holes through which hands hold big pumpkin faces in place on tops of heads.

SKELETONS: Tight black suits of underwear, with bones of body painted on the front and back. Black caps.

BLACK CATS: Black cambric suits fashioned like sleeping garments covering hands and feet; long black tails. If impossible to obtain masks, use tight-fitting caps covering the whole head, with small eye-holes outlined with yellow; tiny holes for the nose; black ears attached. The long tails may be moved from side to side by fastening two strings to each tail and passing them under the suit over the shoulders, one string to the right hand, the other to the left.

OWLS: Brown caps covering heads and faces. Long robes, each with a short spreading train for the tail feathers; long, pointed butterfly sleeves; short ears on caps; large white circles outlining the eye-holes, and stiff paper beak at the breathing hole. Fasten a dark brown quill in folds of robe of FIRST OWL.

CHILDREN: *Children's ordinary apparel.*

SCENE: *The walls should be of cloth, painted to give the effect of tile or stone. At right front, a door with a keyhole; a window at left. For moonlight off stage use a spotlight covered with white tissue paper to shine through the window. A board supported on two chairs just back of center will serve as a perch for OWLS. A few papers and sticks are scattered about. Small table at left front. For the game, living pictures, at right and left of center in the back wall, a square of the wall may be drawn aside. If possible, have the picture posed before a black background.*

As the curtain rises, the scene is lighted only by the moonlight streaming through the windows. The SHERIFF enters right, herding his prisoners: FIRST WITCH dragging iron kettle, SECOND WITCH riding a broomstick, THIRD WITCH carrying a tripod for the iron kettle; THREE CATS; THREE JACK-O'-LANTERNS; THREE SKELETONS; THREE OWLS; THREE GHOSTS. There is much moaning from the GHOSTS, me-ows from the CATS, and whoo-whoos from the OWLS. The WITCHES mumble and growl. Stage becomes dimly lighted when SHERIFF enters with his lantern.

SHERIFF. Hush! Keep quiet! [*The noise ceases.*]

[The OWLS jump up on the perch; the other characters group themselves together.]

[Three knocks on the door are heard.]

SPIRIT OF FUN [*in singsong rhythm off stage, right*]. Hocus-pocus Halloween.

SHERIFF. That's the Spirit of Fun, by Jiminy! [*Opening door, right.*] Come in, Spirit of Fun. We're waiting for you.

SPIRIT OF FUN [*bounding into the room with a portable record player swinging at her side and waving a large yellow leaf*]. It says on this leaf to knock three times on the green door, and sing, "Hocus-pocus Halloween."

SHERIFF [*clamping handcuffs on her right hand*]. That's what it says, all right!

SPIRIT OF FUN [*indignantly*]. What's the meaning of this?

SHERIFF. Put that noise box on the table there. [*SPIRIT OF FUN sets the player on table.*] I have the drop on these prank-crazy youngsters this year.

FIRST JACK-O'-LANTERN. You should be ashamed of yourself.

FIRST SKELETON. Robbing the grave like this!

SECOND SKELETON. Would you condescend to tell us what is to be our fate?

SHERIFF. You just sit still, every one of you, and you needn't worry about your fate.

FIRST WITCH. Come! Come! I must be about my business.

SHERIFF. Your business!

THIRD WITCH. You can't do this to us.

OWLS [*in unison*]. Whoo—whoo! Not to us!

CATS [*in unison*]. Me—ow! me—ow! Me—ee ei—ther!

SHERIFF. Can't I?

GHOSTS [*in unison with deep groans*]. We should say not!

SHERIFF. I'm sick and tired of having you roam about on Halloween, disturbing the peace, and scaring men, women, and little children half to death.

SPIRIT OF FUN [*waving leaf*]. Is this your idea of a prank?

SHERIFF [*shaking with so much mirth that his keys jangle*].

He! He! He! Didn't I fool the lot of you? Getting Dame Nature to write that notice on the leaves of the trees!

THIRD JACK-O'-LANTERN. It's a lie, then? You haven't any new Halloween pranks to show us?

SHERIFF. Yes! Yes! You just stay here in jail all night and have your noise and scaring together. I'm going to give the grownups a nice quiet Halloween. Reckon that'll be the greatest prank you ever saw. [*Sets his lantern by the door, as he unlocks it. Slips through the opened crack, fearful lest his prisoners escape.*]

GHOSTS [*with dismal groans*]. What'll we do? What'll we do?

SECOND WITCH. There must be some way to outwit that key-jangler.

FIRST SKELETON [*picks up the lantern as stage lights grow brighter*]. At least the old fossil forgot his lantern.

FIRST OWL. Put out that light!

SECOND OWL. Put out that light!

THIRD OWL. We'll think it's daytime and go to sleep.

CATS. Me—ow. Me—ow. We'll keep you awake, all right!

THIRD SKELETON. Let's see if we can find a way out.

FIRST SKELETON. I can break the fetters of the tightest grave!

[The OWLS merely turn their heads from side to side, as the others prowl about the room searching for cracks in the wall. Suddenly from among the audience there comes the sound of sobbing from several children as they walk down the aisle to a front seat. Then in rapid succession the children shout.]

FIRST CHILD. I can't find any jack-o'-lanterns.

SECOND CHILD. Where are the witches?

THIRD CHILD. And the ghosts?

FOURTH CHILD. I can't think of a single game.

FIFTH CHILD. Nor remember a jolly prank.

SIXTH CHILD. We won't have any Halloween fun!

[The children take their places on the front row of seats, sobbing and mumbling.]

FIRST WITCH [*comes to front of stage, and, as she speaks, the children in audience cease all noise and commotion*]. What's that?

SECOND JACK-O'-LANTERN. It's the children.

FIRST JACK-O'-LANTERN. They're missing us already.

THIRD CAT [*at center, moving his tail from side to side*].

Me—ow, me—ow! Couldn't someone find a way to get us out of here?

SECOND GHOST [*to WITCHES*]. Use some of your witchcraft now, and open the door.

SECOND WITCH [*dragging her tripod to right front*]. Get some sticks. [*Erects tripod.*] Start a fire. We'll find a way.

[*As FIRST WITCH hangs her kettle, GHOSTS and SKELETONS pick up papers and sticks from stage floor and lay a fire. THIRD WITCH turns on pocket flashlight under the sticks.*]

SPIRIT OF FUN. Why not have a little music? [*Music of "Bambalina" or some stirring tap dance is heard.*]

FIRST SKELETON [*starting a weird dance, center.*] That's the idea! [*Motioning to other SKELETONS.*] We had better limber up. Come on, pals, what say we do our setting-up exercises?

SECOND and THIRD SKELETONS [*in turn*]. Suits me.

FIRST SKELETON. All right. Herc we go!

[The THREE SKELETONS at center front execute a short, comic, loose-jointed tumbling act with many turns. As they do handsprings to the rear, the GHOSTS come to center and perform an eccentric tap dance, every movement in perfect unison. As they tap back, center, the THREE CATS, waving their tails, take their places, center front and walk in time to music, round and round in a circle, making all the ferocious cat sounds possible. Finally, the JACK-O'-LANTERNS, sneaking up to center, frighten the CATS to the background. The JACK-O'-LANTERNS dance, darting here and there as though frightening people. They finish their dance in a heap on the floor facing the OWLS so that they furnish a spotlight for the OWLS who perform a solemn tap dance along their board perch. As the OWLS finish, the SPIRIT OF FUN dances center.

NOTE: Each set of dancers must take up the rhythm with never a moment's wait between the dances.

The SPIRIT OF FUN's interpretative dance is interspersed with living pictures. As she signals to left back, the curtains part showing boy and girl biting an apple suspended from above. Then, at a signal from the SPIRIT OF FUN, curtains right back part and show blindfolded boy and girl blowing out candle. After a moment, curtain closes on picture. SPIRIT OF

FUN dances until she receives a sign that picture in left back is ready. She points to picture, left,—that of a girl dropping apple peeling over her shoulder.]

SPIRIT OF FUN [*reciting gayly*].

Paring, paring, long and green,
Tell my fate for Halloween.

[*Curtain on left picture.*]

[*Right picture: girl looking over shoulder into mirror.*]

SPIRIT OF FUN [*reciting gayly*].

Mirror, mirror tell to me
Who my future fate may be.
Ere the magic moments pass,
Frame his picture in the glass.

[*A boy's reflection appears in mirror back of girl in picture. Curtain is drawn on right picture.*]

FIRST WITCH [*chanting*]. Silence! Silence! [*Complete silence on stage.*] I see a way. I see a way. [*All WITCHES peer into caldron.*]

SECOND and THIRD WITCHES [*stirring brew in caldron.*]

To break the spell of this sheriff foe
We give the charm in letters few.
Through the keyhole you must go—
[*Pointing to different characters.*]

You, and you, and you!

OWL. Much good that will do us.

SECOND JACK-O'-LANTERN. I can't go through a keyhole.

FIRST JACK-O'-LANTERN. We'd ruin our faces!

THIRD CAT. Your faces!

SECOND SKELETON. I can break the fetters of the grave.

FIRST GHOST. But you can't crawl through a keyhole.

WITCHES [*in unison chant*]. We didn't say *crawl*.

[*A moment of tense silence.*]

SPIRIT OF FUN [*running to WITCHES*]. You mean you'll spin a magic web that will make us keyhole size?

WITCHES [*walking around the caldron*]. Through the keyhole you must go! [*Pointing.*] Through the keyhole you must go. [*Pointing.*] Through the keyhole you must go! [*Despondency settles over the others. They slump in their places.*]

SPIRIT OF FUN [*electrically*]. It's a game! It's a mystery.

CATS [*wagging tails*]. We don't approve of jokes!

SPIRIT OF FUN. I have it! [*Pulls the quill from OWL's robe.*] Where's a piece of paper?

FIRST SKELETON. Get us out of here.

THIRD SKELETON. Don't waste time writing letters.

SPIRIT OF FUN. That's what I want to do—write three letters. Where's some paper?

SECOND GHOST. Here's a checkbook in my pocket. [*As SPIRIT OF FUN takes checkbook.*] I grabbed it from

some old man who was trying to take his money into the next world.

SPIRIT OF FUN [*tearing leaf from book*]. This will do. [*Running to caldron.*] This witch's brew will do for ink. [*She dips OWL's quill into caldron and writes.*]

Y — O — U. You.

WITCHES. Pretty smart girl! Pretty smart girl!

THIRD SKELETON. Now, what are you going to do?

SPIRIT OF FUN [*imitating WITCHES*]. Through the keyhole you must go. [*She runs to door, stuffs the paper through the keyhole and, as the door opens, recites:*],

Hocus-pocus, here we come

For a Halloween with lots of fun.

[*With cries of gladness, the liberated Halloween characters exit through the open door.*]

CURTAIN

HALLOWEEN PARTY

TIME OF PLAYING: *About thirty minutes*

CHARACTERS

BOB

BETTY

TOM, *Bob and Betty's older brother*

MARY, *Bob and Betty's older sister*

JACK and two or three boys,
rival gang, neighborhood pests

PETE

NANCY

JOE

ANY OTHERS, *who are able to contribute talent to the party program*

COSTUMES

BOB: *Ordinary clothes, and tramp's costume.*

BETTY: *Ordinary clothes, and witch's costume.*

TOM }
MARY } *Ordinary clothes, and ghost costumes.*

OTHERS: *Ordinary clothes or Halloween costumes of any kind.*

SCENE I

TIME: *Late afternoon.*

SCENE: *A room in a haunted house. At left, a table. Rear right, several odd chairs. Left center, a door which leads to another room. BOB and BETTY are seen decorating the room for a party. Usual Halloween decorations. A few dishes are needed. A large kettle and a long-handled spoon and some red paper are also necessary. A door, right, leads outside.*

BOB. Say, Betty, isn't it swell for our neighborhood club to have our Halloween party in this old haunted house?

BETTY. Yes, but at night it'll be awful scary, I bet you.

BOB. Aw, its just you girls who'll be scared. You're scared of everything like that. Nobody will be afraid with a big gang around.

BETTY. Well, I don't know. It's different after dark.

[Enter JACK, cocky and bold, looking around.]

JACK. I *thought* I heard somebody in here. What goes on?

BETTY. The neighborhood club is having a party tonight.

JACK. Going to have anything to eat?

BETTY. Sure. You always have something to eat at a real party.

JACK. Well, that sounds good to me. Guess I'll come, too.

BOB. You can't come. You're not invited. Nobody is

invited unless they belong to the club, and you don't belong any more. So you're out.

BETTY. If you hadn't tried to break up everything we wanted to do, you wouldn't be out.

JACK. Like fun, I'm out! I'll be in on the party, all right.

BETTY. You can't come, Jack! We put you out of the club because you were always spoiling our fun, and you'd do the same at the party, so you stay away.

BOB. That's right, Jack. You'd better not show up here tonight. We'll throw you out, just as we did when you tried to wreck the club.

JACK. Oh, yeah? Well, I'll get my gang together and we'll fix you and your old party. You'll be sorry. You wait and see.

[Exit JACK, singing "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?"]

BETTY [worried]. You don't suppose they really will make trouble, do you, Bob? They always did when they were in the club.

BOB. They won't want to bother with any old party. The whole bunch will be out marking up windows with soap and breaking up stuff. That's the way *they* celebrate Halloween. Making trouble for somebody.

BETTY. I hope you're right. I wish Tom and Mary would hurry up.

BOB. Are they coming over?

BETTY. Yes. They're bringing the costumes Mother ordered from the store for us. They promised they would stop in and show them to us.

BOB. It'll be fun when they come in like ghosts and scare everybody. Except us, of course. We'll know who they are.

BETTY. Here they come now.

[Enter TOM and MARY with package and kettle.]

BETTY. Hi, Mary.

BOB. Hi, Tom.

TOM. Hi, kids.

BETTY. Did you bring the costumes?

MARY [*handing over package*]. Here they are, honey. A witch's costume for you. Bob is going to be a tramp.

TOM. And here's the kettle for your witch's brew. [*They watch TOM adjust kettle over red paper fire. Then BETTY opens package and displays tramp and witch costumes.*]

BETTY. Oh, look at my tall, pointed hat! I can hardly wait to get dressed.

BOB. I won't do so badly in these old togs, either. [*ALL laugh and MARY re-wraps everything while the others take a last look around.*]

BOB. Well, I guess we're all set.

MARY. Tom and I are all set, too. Our ghost outfits are all ready. We'll do our best to be spooky and scary.

BOB. Boy! I'll bet you'll be great.

BETTY. Oh, won't it be *fun*?

[ALL *laugh*.]

BETTY. Come on, let's go. We have to eat supper and then dress. And it won't be long until the party.

BOB. Yes, we must be ready when everybody comes.

[Exit BOB, MARY, TOM, BETTY with costume package.]

SCENE II

TIME: *Evening*.

SCENE: *The same room. Enter BETTY as a witch and BOB as a tramp. They carry baskets of food, a cake or cookies, etc. These they set on the bench near the door.*

BETTY [*dropping bits of paper into the kettle*]. There now, those are the stunts everybody must do. I'll choose a slip of paper from the kettle for each one.

BOB. I saw Jack again just before supper, when I went to the store for bread for Mother. He still says he and his gang are coming to the party.

BETTY. Oh, dear! I do hope not. They'd spoil everything.

BOB. Don't worry. If Jack and his outfit show up, I'll get the fellows in our club together and we'll toss 'em out. We'll take care of 'em.

BETTY. Well, it's no use to worry. It's about time for the party. Are we all set?

BOB [*looking around*]. Got everything I can think of. Looks all right to me.

[*There is a knock at the door.*]

BETTY. The party's here.

[BOB *opens the door, right*. GUESTS, *all in costume, come in.*]

BETTY. Hello, everybody! Hello!

GUESTS. Hello, Bob. Hello, Betty.

A GUEST. It certainly looks nice in here.

[GUESTS *walk around and look at everything*. One boy *has a glove filled with wet sand which he sticks on the girls' necks to make them squeal.*]

BOB [*coming to center of stage and clapping his hands*]. Quiet, everybody! Quiet! All of you sit down, just anywhere.

[GUESTS *sit down on floor and on chairs, leaving a small space for the star performers.*]

BETTY [*sitting down by her kettle and stirring the contents with the big spoon*].

Oh, I'm a witch!
I don't care which
Of you think that I'm not.
And I've a brew
For each of you
Within this boiling pot.

So at your name
Come get the same,
And do your very best.
It's very true
No one of you
Is better than the rest.

BOB [*talking like a barker at a side show*]. Pete, you go first. Step right up, Pete, old boy, old boy! Don't be afraid. The witch won't bite you. She has only two teeth, and they don't meet.

[*ALL laugh. PETE comes up rather reluctantly.*]

BETTY [*stirring as PETE approaches and stands near her*].

The witch's brew
Will say to you
What you must do.
Read! Read! Read!

PETE [*pretending to read paper*].

Like a frog you now must hop
Till the witch says you may stop.

[PETE *hops like a frog*. ALL *whoop and laugh*.]

BOB. Now it's Nancy's turn.

BETTY [*handing NANCY a slip*]. Read! Read! Read!

NANCY [*reading*].

This is sweet and not too long.
Sing your little friends a song.

[NANCY *sings a short song*. Applause.]

BOB. That was fine, Nancy. Now—[BOB *is interrupted by a spooky howl off stage*. Everyone looks all around.]

ALL. What is that? Where did it come from?

BETTY [*to BOB*]. That's Tom and Mary. Isn't it fun?

BOB [*doubtfully*]. I don't know about that. Tom and Mary are just in the other room. Sounded to me as if that yell came from outside.

BETTY [*alarmed*]. It may be Jack and his gang.

BOB. Oh, I guess not.

BETTY. Well, let's get on with this kettle business.

BOB. Okay. Joe, it's your turn.

BETTY [*handing JOE a paper*]. Read! Read! Read!

JOE [*reading*].

Speak a piece and you will get
Jolly food you won't forget.

[JOE *speaks this piece*. Another poem may be used if desired.]

HALLOWEEN

The witches were flying around with their cats,
Their horses were broomsticks; the traffic cops, bats;
The sly jack-o'-lanterns were winking their eyes
At gay, frosty stars in the Halloween skies.
Each pale ghost was lurking to step from behind
The biggest old tree that each one could find,
And whispering lists to see if they'd enough
To scare the world silly when they did their stuff,
When suddenly all of the group gathered there
Heard howls from the wind that would lift up your hair.

[*Interruption as a GUEST sitting on the floor cries out and points to exit right.*]

GUEST. Oh, look. Somebody stole that cake!

EVERYBODY [*scrambling up from floor*]. Run! Catch him.
Don't let him get away with it! [ALL *get in each other's way so that nobody reaches the door and JACK and his gang rush in. The Club falls back, BOB remaining a little in advance of the others with some of the club boys directly behind him as reinforcements.*]

JACK. That cake was good. We're going to take the rest of the eats, too!

BOB. No, you're not. You let those things alone!

[JACK'S gang seizes baskets of food, ready to run, when there is a loud yell or two and TOM and MARY in ghost costumes enter. JACK and his gang drop everything with howls of fright and huddle against the back wall, crying, "Ghosts!" and "Haunted House!" TOM and MARY show their faces. ALL laugh.]

BETTY. Thank you, Tom and Mary. You saved our food for us. Now you must have a share of it.

BOB. Yes. I think we've had enough spookiness for one night. At least Jack and his gang have had plenty.

MARY [*taking JACK'S shoulder and drawing him gently forward*]. I'd like to make a suggestion. Why not let Jack and the other boys share in the feast, too, after they have done their stunts? After all, they used to belong to the club.

BOB. That's okay with me.

TOM. It's more fun to be in with the crowd and have a share in things, than to sneak in, isn't it boys?

JACK. Yes, I guess that's right.

BETTY. Sure it is, Jack. And we'd *like* to have you, if only you'll join in instead of breaking things up. Bob said you wouldn't come because you boys would be out

making trouble for somebody. But you did come, so it looks as though you'd rather be with us.

JACK. Well, what do we have to do to get back in?

BOB. One or two short stunts are all that are necessary.

[JACK and his gang each do a specialty number. Everybody applauds heartily as the newcomers finish, and the boys sit down while the girls begin passing food under MARY's supervision. JACK and his gang mingle happily with the others.]

BETTY. It's fun, having a Halloween party in a real haunted house. Let's do it again next year, shall we?

GUESTS. Yes! Yes! Let's do!

JACK. My gang and I will be the hosts next time. It's our turn to give a party for you, and I'll promise you we'll do it right. This is simply great!➤

[ALL busy themselves with food.]

CURTAIN



P

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S

MY JACK-O'-LANTERN

A jack-o'-lantern I will make.
I have a pumpkin yellow.
When I get through carving him,
He'll be a jolly fellow.

It's not the time for gloomy looks,
It's not the time of year.
I'll carve a smile upon his face
That goes from ear to ear.

A TOAST TO HALLOWEEN

Here's to the season of the year
When black cats run and witches ride;
Here's to the season we hold dear
When wisdom's mask is laid aside,
And in its stead gay jollity
Rides broomsticks over land and sea.

THE BROWNIE'S PUNISHMENT

A funny wee Brownie, on Halloween,
Had a lot of mischievous fun.
He tickled the cow till she kicked the pail,
And started away on the run.

He put two old cats in an empty pail,
A cruel sort of thing to have done.
He watched them fight and he squealed with glee
And thought he was having some fun.

He carted away all the neighbor's wood
And scattered it all everywhere;
Then upward he looked and saw that a witch
Was coming right down through the air.

Off on her broom she Sir Brownie took,
To scold him for what he had done.
"You have some funny ideas," she said,
"Of what you can do, and call fun."

Then up in the air she quickly sailed,
While Brownie beside her sat,
Till her home she reached, where she tied him up,
To be watched by her horrid black cat.

The old cat scratched him and clawed him well,
And fiercely she spat and yowled,
Till Brownie was scared as he could be.
Dear me! How that poor Brownie howled!

Up spoke the witch. "Well, Brownie," she said,
"Do you like this kind of fun?"

"Oh, no," answered he. "Do take me back,
And my mischief shall soon be undone."

So back on the broomstick steed they sped,
A queer pair of riders to see.
And though he was bitten and sorely scratched,
He soon set those two old cats free.

Then, for hours and hours and hours,
He worked, and he worked hard and well,
To gather together and nicely pile
The wood he had scattered pell-mell.

The sun was coming up in the east,
Ere he with his big task was through,
But only kind deeds, from that Halloween,
Did little Sir Brownie dare do.

Now Halloween is the time for pranks,
But let it be harmless fun,
For unkind deeds you will surely regret,
And wish that they hadn't been done.

UNSELFISH HALLOWEEN

Bud made a jack-o'-lantern.
Oh, my, but it was fine!
Its face was queer and jolly,
And how its eyes did shine!

He gave it to a shut-in lad
To make his Halloween more glad.

I took the pulp that we scraped out
And made a pumpkin pie;
My mother said she'd help me,
And so I thought I'd try.
I gave the pie for a surprise
To poor, old, lonely Mrs. Wise.

Oh, it is very jolly,
This fun of making things;
But it is even better
To see the joy it brings
When what is made by girl or boy
Is shared to make another's joy.

JACK-O'-LANTERN ADVICE

Said the tiny jack-o'-lantern
To his kindly mother,
"Would that I could shine as brightly
As my great big brother!"

"When it comes to shining, Jackie,
Envy not another.
Shine as much as you are able,"
Said his beaming mother.

WHO'S AFRAID?

I'll never, never scare again—
Not anybody, ever—
For just a little while ago,
I *sure* was cured forever!
You see, I had a pumpkin ball
Carved out to fit my head,
And thought I'd spend this Halloween
Scaring folks in bed.
When it was dark, I got all dressed
As scary as could be,
Put on a sheet and that old head—
You couldn't tell 'twas me.

I sneaked upstairs where Sister sleeps,
As quiet as a mouse.
Oh, it was dark and spooky, too,
No one stirring in the house.
And just when I came in, I saw
The worst thing there could be.
A great, big, giant pumpkin face
Was glaring straight at me.
Twice as big as I it was.
It moved when I moved too.
If you should see a thing like that,
How much would it scare you?

I couldn't help a-screaming out
And running to Mom fast.
And though she talked to me, I'm cured
Of scaring folks at last.
Mom said it was myself I saw—
That giant with big eyes;
She says Sis has a mirror there,
A glass that "magnifies."
I don't know what she means by that!
I know one thing for sure—
I'll never scare a soul again.
That giant was my cure!

HOW PUMPKIN-WEE SAW THE KING

A pumpkin great, a mighty thing,
Grew in the garden of a king.
A servant said, as he passed by,
"This one's just right for pumpkin pie."

"Oh, take me, too," said Pumpkin-Wee,
"The king's the one I want to see."
Just then the prince came down the line
And saw the pumpkin on the vine.

"Oh, I will take you home with me;
A jack-o'-lantern you shall be."

The young prince cut and carved a while
And made the little pumpkin smile.

And when the king saw it that night,
He laughed and laughed with all his might.
“What is this thing with eyes of fire?”
“Oh, that’s a jack-o’-lantern, sire.”

HALLOWEEN’S FOR BOYS

Girls may like the Easter-time,
Or, if they have a chance,
They like to dress in pretty clothes
And round the Maypole dance;
To gather up a bunch of dolls
And dress them are their joys.
But we like something full of thrills—
So, Halloween’s for boys.

We like to put a false-face on
And walk the darkest street.
Sometimes we’re ghosts all dressed in white;
We scare the folks we meet.
We like to play with ticktacks, too.
They make a lot of noise
And frighten girls ’most any time—
So Halloween’s for boys.

A WINDOW JACK-O'-LANTERN

I made a jack-o'-lantern;
Its face was all awry.
I set it in a window
Where folks were passing by.

And then I stood behind it
To see what I could see,
And as the folks went passing by,
They smiled at it and me.

SPOOK AND PUMPKIN PIE

I dressed myself just like a spook,
Jumped out at little Bob;
I thought that I was having fun
Although it made him sob.

But when the suppertime came round
I almost had to cry,
For mother said, "Of course, a spook
Can't eat a pumpkin pie."

"I'm not a spook at all!" I said,
And threw away my sheet.
"How fine!" she said. "Now you may have
This big pie for a treat."

HALLOWEEN IS FUN

A pumpkin's such a pretty thing
So big and round and yellow;
No wonder that he looks so fine,
This jack-o'-lantern fellow.

I like to watch his flickering eyes,
His grin, so strange and wide;
And see the burning candlelight
That I put down inside.

Halloween is so much fun,
I wish it would not go;
And the funny jack-o'-lanterns
Wish it, too, I know.

JACK-O'-LANTERN SEED

Inside the jack-o'-lantern
That Buddy made for me
I found these seeds. I'm lucky;
I'm going to plant them, see?
And raise big jack-o'-lanterns;
Then if the plants all grow,
I'll give a jack-o'-lantern
To every child I know!

WISHES COME TRUE

"When I grow up," said Pumpkin-Wee,
"A jack-o'-lantern I would be."
"When I get big," said Pumpkin Small,
"I want to be a pie, that's all!"
The wishes of these pumpkins two
Came true, as wishes often do.
I made a lantern, don't you see,
From great, big, grown-up Pumpkin-Wee.
Mom made a pie out of his brother.
One had his wish, so had the other.

MY HALLOWEEN FUN

This Halloween I bet
I have a lot of fun;
I'll dress up like a witch
And scare most everyone.

I'll wear a tall black hat,
 *[Speak these lines very slowly,
 and in a spooky manner.]*
I'll wear a long black dress,
I'll put on long black gloves,
I'll look a sight, I guess.
 [faster, laughing.]

I'll sneak around so softly
And say, "I'll — get — you!"

[*Sneak across stage.*]

I bet I'll make folks scamper 'round
When I chase them and yell, "Woo-oo-oo-oo!"

[*Moan.*]

HAPPY JACK-O'-LANTERN

[*Recitation for a little child who wears a jack-o'-lantern over his head, or holds a large one in front of him.*]

I like being a jack-o'-lantern.
It's fun to spread good cheer
By grinning at everyone passing by,
One night out of every year.

SHADOW OF A GHOST

There is a little shadow,
That I love to see;
It's the shadow of a ghost
When that ghost is me.

I creep across the living room
And say, "The spooks are here."
I like to dress up in a sheet
When Halloween is near.

THE HALLOWEEN JOKE

Oh, I made a jack-o'-lantern,
A gay, funny jack-o'-lantern,
Just the sort to make one laugh though he is ill;
'Twas a fat and jolly pumpkin,
Like a hearty, grinning bumpkin,
And I took it to the boy up on the hill.

Now, it must be very dreary
When a boy's too sick and weary
To get out and work a ticktack on a pane;
And I thought, "I must prepare him,
It would never do to scare him,"
As I sneaked my jack-o'-lantern down the lane.

By the window he was sitting,
And he saw the light come flitting
And the candle shining, as I neared the house;
But the window curtains screened him,
And I never would have seen him
As I crept up, soft and silent, like a mouse.

Then immediately after,
He gave out a shout of laughter,
And his mother said she knew that he'd get well;

And the joke of the whole secret
Is, instead, he startled me! But
He can't know who brought the jack. So don't you tell!

HALLOWEEN

I saw a lot of ghosts
A-walkin' late last night;
And I was really scared,
'Twas such an awful sight.

A jack-o'-lantern glared
From way up in a tree;
And I was as afraid,
As I could ever be!

And then I said to Dad,
"Whatever does it mean?"
He said, "Now don't you fear,
For this is Halloween."

"And when you grow," he said,
"As big as Norman Brown,
You'll like to play that you're
A ghost that's come to town."

A GHOSTLY WELCOME

[*Spoken by child in Halloween costume.*]

Welcome to our program.

Welcome, one and all.

We hope you won't be frightened

Inside this ghostly hall.

If you see spooks and witches,

Don't be afraid and run.

Remember that it's Halloween,

And join in all the fun.

NICE BOY

[*Boy wearing good suit.*]

They said that I had to get dressed up

In a suit and a shirt that's all clean,

And be a "nice boy" at the party,

When Sis celebrates Halloween.

But shucks, that's no fun for a fellow.

I want to be out with the crowd,

A ticktacking windows, and stomping,

And banging on porches real loud.

I don't want to get into mischief.

We fellows just like to have fun.

It's exciting when folks start to chase you,
Or old Man Smith goes for his gun.

But here I am, dressed like a sissy;
If you ask me, I think it's plain mean
To expect a he-man sort of fellow
To be a "nice boy" Halloween.

IT'S ONLY ME

[Small child wearing sheet and mask.]

Here's a very scary ghost,
As spooky as can be.
But don't be scared and run away,
It's really—only ME.

[Takes off mask, runs off platform waving it.]

N O V E L T I E S



HALLOWEEN SYMBOLS

CHARACTERS

FOUR CHILDREN

COSTUMES

Children may be dressed as the characters they represent.

FIRST CHILD.

I am a witch all dressed in black.
I scatter fear and gloom.
I always wear a pointed hat
And ride upon a broom.

SECOND CHILD.

A ghost, that's what you see I am,
Dressed in a robe of white.
I moan and make strange noises, too,
And scare folks late at night.

THIRD CHILD.

I am a cat, as you can see,
And very, very black.
For ages I have hoodooed folks
Afraid I'll cross their track.

FOURTH CHILD.

Look what I have! A ticktack, see!
The use is very plain.
It makes a screechy, scary noise
Upon a windowpane.

ALL.

We all are nuisances, of course,
Wherever we are seen,
But leave us out and there would be
No spooky Halloween.

WHICH WAS QUEEN?

SCENE: *On one side of stage are the grain, corn, and other things mentioned. At the other side, or behind a screen, a reader. When the last stanza is read a boy dressed in overalls may arrange the grain, corn, boughs and pumpkins on the front of stage.*

On the morn of a bright October day
From over the rise of the hill away,
I heard loud voices of discontent
And listened to hear what the trouble meant.
An old apple tree that had stood for years
Was voicing her woe almost in tears.
"The harvest is here again, you see,
And nobody yet has chosen me

To be the Queen, the Queen of the Fall,
Though I am the noblest of them all.
Think of my red and juicy fruit,
The fancy tastes that I always suit,
The apple pies and the dumplings, too,
I'm grandest of all if they only knew!"

The vegetables then in the garden near,
Said, "It seems to us it is very clear—
Potatoes and carrots and beets and peas—
Pray what could they do without us, please?
We furnish a menu for every meal,
We are the ones with taste appeal."
A big yellow pumpkin, a garden prize,
Asked, "What would they do without my pies?"
The rustling corn stuck up its ears
Straightway voicing its doubts and fears.
"I am the first, the Golden Corn,
Always pictured in Plenty's Horn.
I, the crown of the Queen should wear,
To pass me by they would never dare."
The shocks of grain in a field near by
In shaking voice commenced to cry,
"You are not so useful now as we,
As almost anyone can see.
We furnish to man the Staff of Life,

So what is the use of all this strife?"
A farmer who stopped his team to rest,
Had heard their trouble and their protest.
He said to them with a kindly smile,
"The only way that life's worth while
Is not to live for ourselves alone.
A better, far better, way is known.
Each of you has a gift to give,
Helping somebody else to live.
Giving yourselves, is the only way
You can be crowned the Queen today."

So, taking a sheaf of ripened grain,
He laid around it a golden chain
Of yellow corn, and then, you see,
He twined it with boughs of the apple tree.
Then placing the pumpkin atop of all
He judged each one of them, Queen of the Fall.

HALLOWEEN NOISES

Tune: "Comin' Thro' the Rye"

SCENE: Stage is partly lighted. After and during the last stanza, all noises are made together.

Hear the sound of witches sweeping,
Sweeping with their brooms,
[*Noise of brooms.*]

And the white-robed ghosts a-tramping,
Tramping through our rooms.
[*Noise of tramping.*]

Hear the sound of goblins howling,
Howling in the night.
[*Imitate sound.*]

Hear the sound of children laughing,
Laughing with delight.
[*Laughter.*]

Hear the black cats meowing, meowing,
As they slyly pass,
[*Cats meow.*]

And the ticktacks clatter, clatter,
On the window glass.
[*Scrapping noise.*]

Listen, hear the noises, noises,
Though no one is seen.
Yet we're not afraid, afraid,
For it's Halloween.

NOT AFRAID—NOT MUCH!

[*Very brave*]

I'm not afraid of anything
That I have ever seen;
I'm not afraid of witches
Or ghosts on Halloween.

[*Still brave, but weakening*]

I'm not afraid of jack-o'-lanterns
Even when they stare
At me from darkest corners;
LIKE THOSE RIGHT OVER THERE.

[*Scared plenty!*]

I'm not afraid of anything
That I have ever seen.
That is, I'm not so much afraid
Even on Halloween.

NOTE: *This recitation can be used as a musical number. A child recites the first two stanzas. Behind him are ghosts, cats, witches, jack-o'-lanterns, and all sorts of Halloween "spooks." When he recites the line in large type he points to the "spooks" and they begin to creep toward him. Then he recites the last stanza rapidly and runs from the stage. The "spooks" now form a circle and do a rhythmic dance to appropriate music.*

DON'T BE AFRAID

[*Small girl carries a doll.*]

Now Dolly dear, it's Halloween,
I want to talk to you.
I thought you might get frightened,
I've heard some children do.

If you should see a big, tall ghost
[*Looks over shoulder.*]

Don't be afraid and cry.
Just remember, darling,
That mother is near by.

Besides, there really are no ghosts,
My daddy told me that.

[*Growing more frightened.*]
Or witches riding on their brooms,
Or goblins thin or fat.

So Dolly, don't you be afraid
Of anything you see.
For I am right beside you
As brave as brave can be—

[*Cries loudly: "Mamma, Mamma!" and runs off stage.*]

THE RUNAWAY HALLOWEEN CAT

[*A recitation for a child in cat costume*]

I'm the Halloween cat that rides past the moon,
I just got away and not any too soon;
I heard the old witch tell a Halloween bat
That she needed a new, younger Halloween cat.

Well, now I'm old, but I can still dive
On that silly old broom, and my sakes alive,
I'm good as the day that the witch found me, I bet;
I have nine lives, and I'm a good old cat, yet!

I can run. [*Runs about stage.*]

I can jump. [*Jumps around.*]

I can arch my back high. [*Gets down on hands
and feet, arches back.*]

I can creep on my toes. [*Creeps around stage.*]

I bet I could fly! [*Tries to fly.*]

[*Pauses here; acts tired; rubs back; acts stiff.*]

Whew! My back is tired!

Still I'm one of the best! [*Struts, puts paws un-
der arms, then weakens.*]

Let her get a new cat!

I think that I'll rest. [*Curls up on floor and be-
gins to purr like a cat.*]

CURTAIN

UP-TO-DATE CHILDREN

Playlet for any number of children, four of whom recite lines. The four UP-TO-DATE CHILDREN wear ordinary school clothes. The others are dressed as ghosts, witches, and other Halloween creatures.

UP-TO-DATE CHILDREN march onto stage. Each carries a large book, and speaks in wise, precise fashion.

FIRST CHILD.

We Up-to-Date Children
Are hard to deceive.
This Halloween nonsense
We just can't believe.

SECOND CHILD.

We've never seen ghosts,
Or a witch with a broom,
Or a fearful black cat
That flies to the moon.

THIRD CHILD.

As for jack-o'-lanterns,
They never scare us.
We wonder why some folks
Make such a great fuss.

FOURTH CHILD.

You see, we read books,
And have knowledge galore.
So talk about spooks
To us is a bore.

[As FOURTH CHILD *speaks, the ghosts, witches, goblins, and others enter quietly, creeping up beside the UP-TO-DATE CHILDREN who suddenly turn and see them, scream, cover faces, and run to rear of stage. Spooks wave arms, run about stage, and then disappear. Gradually, the UP-TO-DATE CHILDREN come out of hiding, look about fearfully, and tiptoe back to front of stage where they recite the following in shaking voices.*]

ALL.

We Up-to-Date Children
Are hard to deceive.
But what we have seen
We have to believe.

No longer we'll laugh at
Ghosts, witches, and elves,
We know there are such,
For we've seen them ourselves.

[*They tiptoe off stage, looking back over shoulders.*]

A RECIPE FOR HALLOWEEN

CHARACTERS

THREE BOYS

FIRST BOY.

Take a dozen witches,
Broomsticks, five or six,
Several hundred goblins,
Each one up to tricks.

SECOND BOY.

Take some owls a-hooting
And some scattng cats,
Jack-o'-lanterns spooky,
Several hundred bats.

THIRD BOY.

Season well with laughter
Harmless fun that's fine;
Add a dash of shivers
Creeping down the spine.

ALL.

Stir them all together,
Looking very sober,
In a big, black caldron,
Last day of October.

A HALLOWEEN ACROSTIC

CHARACTERS

NINE CHILDREN

Children enter, each carrying one letter of the word, "Halloween." These letters may be made of orange or black construction paper, or large orange or black letters can be drawn on a white background. Letters are held at an even height so that the completed word may be read easily by the audience. As each child speaks, he takes a step forward, and holds the letter before him.

ALL.

We're nine little letters so jolly and gay,
Just put us together and we'll spell a day.

FIRST CHILD.

H is for happiness, laughter, and joy,
That old Halloween brings to each girl and boy.

SECOND CHILD.

A is the apple for which we all bob.
The person who tries it has quite a big job.

THIRD CHILD.

L is for leaves we must all help to rake
To make a big bonfire our chestnuts to bake.

FOURTH CHILD.

L is for lanterns, on Halloween night,
With horrible faces that give us a fright.

FIFTH CHILD.

O is for the oh's and the ah's that will greet
Those queer-looking spooks we shall see on the
street.

SIXTH CHILD.

W stands for the weird, funny noise
That's made by the ghosts who are just girls and
boys.

SEVENTH CHILD.

E is for embers; they're just right to toast
The yummy marshmallows for some hungry
ghost.

EIGHTH CHILD.

E means enough when we've eaten our fill,
A good time to stop is before we are ill.

NINTH CHILD.

N is the last of the letters you've seen.
Put us together, we'll spell Halloween.

*[At conclusion of drill, children turn and march off
stage.]*

A GHOSTLY GATHERING

[A Halloween novelty for any number of children.]

FIRST GHOST	} <i>speaking characters</i>
SECOND GHOST	

CHILDREN, *any number, wearing sheets and masks*

SCENE: *Stage should be slightly darkened to create an eerie effect. Spooky music should be played as FIRST and SECOND GHOSTS enter, from opposite sides, and peer about in the gloom.*

FIRST GHOST [*jovially*]. Ah, there you are, Friend Ghost. There you are.

SECOND GHOST [*complainingly*]. Yes, here I am, and I suppose I'll have to stay right here until midnight. But I do think, since we ghosts get out so seldom, we might have a little time for sight-seeing.

FIRST GHOST. You're wrong there, Friend Ghost. We ghosts aren't supposed to do any sight-seeing. Why, we're the sights and we're supposed to be seen—after midnight on Halloween. [*Laughs heartily at his joke.*]

SECOND GHOST [*sourly*]. Well, I think this Halloween business is a lot of nonsense. And very hard on the

clothes. Some of the young goblins and elves get very rough. Why, I'll have to have an entire new outfit after tonight.

FIRST GHOST. Too bad, Friend Ghost. And I understand it's very difficult to get new things these days. Better hold on to what you have. [*Laughs heartily.*]

SECOND GHOST. Yes, I suppose so. [*Takes out large mirror from under sheet, inspects self.*] It seems to me I'm looking very pale tonight.

FIRST GHOST. To be sure, to be sure. But who wouldn't be pale after being shut up in a stuffy graveyard for three hundred and sixty-four nights! [*Bell rings, or clock strikes.*] Hark, isn't that the sound of midnight? It's time the rest of the ghosts were coming.

[*As clock strikes, lines of GHOSTS enter from each side in time with ghostly music and take their places across the stage.*]

FIRST GHOST. Here they are now.

SECOND GHOST. Then let's all have a happy Halloween together.

[*FIRST and SECOND GHOSTS sing the following, while others wave and bend from side to side in ghostly fashion.*]

Tune: "Little Brown Jug"

Happy Halloween ghosts are we,
Full of fun and gaiety.
Though we come but once a year,
To the world we bring good cheer.

CHORUS

Ha ha ha. He he he.
Happy Halloween ghosts are we.
Ha ha ha. He he he.
Happy Halloween ghosts are we.

Trimly dressed in garments white,
We can best be seen at night.
Do not be afraid, we pray.
When dawn comes, we'll go away.

CURTAIN

MY HALLOWEEN MASK

I've made a Halloween mask
With jagged teeth and ugly eyes;
I'll tell you what I plan to do
But sh! It's to be a surprise.

I'll sneak behind Betty Jane
And then behind Sally, too;
I know they'll all be scared to death
When I hold this up and yell, "Boo!"

[*Child holds mask in his hand. As he recites last line, he places it over his face.*]

HALLOWEEN AS IT SHOULD BE

*Dialogue and march for twenty-eight characters.
Number can be cut if desired.*

TIME OF PLAYING: *About ten minutes*

CHARACTERS

ONE WITCH, *a tall girl*
FOUR BROWNIES, *girls*
FOUR CATS, *boys*
FOUR BATS, *girls*
FOUR CLOWNS, *boys*
TWO GHOSTS, *tall, slim girls*
EIGHT MERRYMAKERS, *four boys and four girls*
ONE BACKSTAGE HELPER

COSTUMES

WITCH: *Long black robe. Black mask and pointed hat.*
BATS: *Black pajamas with wings hung from arms.*

BROWNIES: *Soft brown pajamas. Golden yellow caps and brown masks.*

CATS: *Black pajamas with claws on hands and feet. Black cat masks.*

CLOWNS: *Large suits of white with huge dots of red, blue, and green. Clown masks.*

GHOSTS: *Draped sheets with skeleton masks in black and white, or solid white masks.*

MERRYMAKERS: *Ordinary clothes and funny masks. Bells for the girls. Horns for the boys. One paper jack-o'-lantern for each player.*

SCENE: *A teepee of cornstalks right side of stage serves as a witch's cave. Through this cave the performers may pass to and from the stage. A large black kettle or pot in the cave is visible to the audience.*

The curtain rises on the old WITCH bending above the big black pot and stirring vigorously with a long-handled paddle. The WITCH stands a little to right of pot and faces audience. Looks intently into pot as she stirs vigorously. Then she lifts her head and looks at the calendar. Turns again to pot. Stirs rapidly and speaks.

WITCH.

Now I'm not one to make complaint,
Or do a lot of crying;

But it disturbs me when I think
How swiftly time is flying.

It seems but yesterday to me,
With bright moon hanging low,
I staged a jolly Halloween,
But now I truly know

That twelve busy, happy months
Have passed away since then,
And now it's time for me to think
Of Halloween again.

[*Pauses to stir vigorously.*]

I only wish just once in life,
That I might live to see
The world observe one Halloween
Just as it ought to be.

[FIRST BROWNIE *slips through the door, takes his place beside pot, and looks up at the WITCH.*]

WITCH. Hello, young fellow! What's on your mind?

FIRST BROWNIE. Not a prank, I'll have you know. That isn't really kind.

WITCH.

Fine, fine, my lad,
Call in your crowd!
Kind-hearted Brownies
Make me proud.

[FIRST BROWNIE whistles and three other BROWNIES follow their leader through the witch's cave to the stage. Here they all join hands and swing around the stage twice and pause, looking at the WITCH.]

WITCH [smiling]. Be seated, my friends. [Motions them to left front corner of stage. BROWNIES run to designated corner and drop down in a huddle, heads close. WITCH shakes finger at them.]

WITCH. No mischief-making on your part, but you might tell me if you saw any of my other symbols as you came in.

FIRST BROWNIE [excitedly]. I did see four black cats on the fence as I came in.

WITCH. Thanks, my lad! [Turns her face toward the right and calls softly.] Kitty, Kitty, Kitty.

[Enter the four CATS on all fours. Passing the WITCH unceremoniously, they move in slow, cat-like fashion, all meowing in weird tones. Twice they circle the stage, then pause before the WITCH, who surveys them critically. Then playfully lifting the paddle

from the pot, she waves it over the CATS. Instantly they rise to their feet.]

WITCH [*merrily*]. Cats always walk on their hind feet on Halloween. Be seated, please.

[Motions them to middle of left side. CATS take their places, drop down to a sitting posture, draw their knees up, and fold their paws about them. The movement of their heads as they gaze about the stage with nods toward each other can add much merriment to the scene. WITCH claps her hands and CATS look in her direction.]

WITCH. Did you see any of my Halloween symbols on the way over? [*CATS nudge each other.*] Did you?

FIRST CAT [*slowly wipes mouth with his paw and speaks*].

We ran into a bevy of bats on our way over.

SECOND CAT [*wipes mouth*]. We didn't catch all of them.

THIRD CAT [*wipes mouth*]. Naw, some of them got away.

WITCH [*angrily*]. Shame on you! Don't you know it's wrong to catch a bat on Halloween? [*Turns face to right. Calls in gentle voice.*] Come, my winged friends. I am waiting for you!

[FOUR BLACK BATS enter by way of the cave. Holding their tattered wings out, they make a circle around the stage and pause before the WITCH.]

FIRST BAT [*bows and speaks for all*].

Please, Lady Witch, I wish you would
Inform those [*looks at CATS*] pesky cats,
They shouldn't ever interfere
On Halloween, with bats.

WITCH [*consolingly*]. I've already scolded them for their thoughtlessness. Be seated, my friends, be seated.

BATS [*eye the CATS suspiciously, then settle down close together on the right-hand side of the stage*]. Thanks.

WITCH [*speaking to BATS*]. I hope you met other friends on the way to our celebration.

LARGEST BAT. We passed a group of Clowns as we came over. They were headed this way.

WITCH [*hand over eyes, peers to right, calls pleasantly*].

Oh, Clown! Oh, Clown, in your jolly new gown,
Come, let yourself be seen.

With Brownies and Cats and gentle young Bats,
You're headed for Halloween.

[*Enter FOUR CLOWNS through the cave. In rotation, each closely following the other, they somersault around the stage and rise, one by one, near the witch's cave, facing the WITCH.*]

WITCH. Halloween wouldn't be complete without clowns. Be seated, my friends.

[CLOWNS look around impishly. Prance to left rear corner of stage. In unison CATS utter a snarling hiss as CLOWNS sit down.]

WITCH [*craning her neck, surveys the symbols on the stage and shakes her head*]. We're still short a few guests.

LARGEST CLOWN [*stuttering*]. You—you—aren't looking for—for a group of ghosts, are—are you?

WITCH. Whoever heard of a true Halloween celebration without a few ghosts? [*Turning her face to right and shading her eyes, peers to right. Calls in commanding tones.*]

Oh, Ghosts! Oh, Ghosts! In garments white!
Come join our merry group tonight.
Without your aid, I must confess,
Gay Halloween would be much less.

[WITCH slowly draws herself to full height and steps back closer to wall of cave.]

[Enter TWO GHOSTS holding each other up. Slowly and lightly the two GHOSTS move about the stage from the BATS to the BROWNIES, to the CATS, and to the CLOWNS, making odd movements at each group who in turn duck their heads as if frightened. After the GHOSTS

have inspected the performers, they pause before the witch's cave.]

WITCH [*motioning to middle section of right side*]. Be seated, my friends, and make yourselves comfortable.

[*BATS huddle close together in one place.*]

WITCH [*turns, peers to right, and speaks in joyful tone*]. The Merrymakers, of course. Who ever heard of Halloween without its Merrymakers?

[*Enter MERRYMAKERS through cave, running and ringing bells and blowing horns. Swiftly they circle the stage while each group drops closer to the floor. At the end of the round, the MERRYMAKERS suddenly halt and silently turn to the WITCH.*]

FIRST MERRYMAKER.

Oh, Witch, do tell us, pray,
What happened to our night?
Gay Halloween would be no fun
Without a lantern bright.

WITCH [*consolingly*]. Be not alarmed, my dears. The good Halloween Witch never lets her friends down. [*Reaching to the right her hands come back with a lighted lantern in each hand. They are handed to her*

by a backstage helper. The door to the right is unseen by audience. WITCH passes out the lanterns to the MERRYMAKERS, who in turn deliver them to the performers. They rise to their feet and accept them. With the delivery of the lanterns the MERRYMAKERS take their places. WITCH goes out door at right and enters through cave with a broom in one hand and a lantern in the other. Moves toward right-hand corner of stage, then to rear left corner and back to cave. The GHOSTS fall in line behind her, single file. The BATS follow the GHOSTS. The BROWNIES, CATS, and CLOWNS fall into line in single file. MERRYMAKERS come last of all. ALL form a line across the rear of the stage.]

NOTE: The performance can end here, but a very effective climax can be attained by suddenly darkening the stage when the line straightens at the wall. The WITCH and her followers with the lighted lanterns in right hands, march twice around the stage in a winding trail, moving toward left all the while until at last they form a straight line across the middle of the stage. With profile to audience, the performers lift lanterns at arms' length over shoulders of the performers in front. Then, as they blow their horns and ring their bells, the curtain falls.

A HALLOWEEN SHADOW-SHOW

*(For Children of the Primary Grades)*TIME OF PLAYING: *About ten minutes*

CHARACTERS

WITCH, *a girl*BLACK CAT, *a boy*GIRL, *with jack-o'-lantern*BAT, *a boy*GOBLIN, *a boy*FIVE CHILDREN, *who recite the verses*

COSTUMES

WITCH: *Tall, conical hat. Shawl over shoulders. Long skirt. Broomstick.*BLACK CAT: *Tight sweater, with sleeves pulled down over hands. Long tail. Skull cap with small pointed ears.*GIRL: *Clothing suitable for school. Carries jack-o'-lantern, which is simply a flat cardboard jack-o'-lantern silhouette. The eyes, nose, and mouth should be generously cut.*BAT: *Tight-fitting helmet which hugs the neck snugly. Long trousers. To the child's outstretched arms, which are held sideways at shoulder height, elbows*

slightly bent and forearms hanging down at an angle, are fastened pieces of opaque cloth to represent the bat's wings. The lower edge of this cloth is cut in large reverse scallops, with sharp points between each two arcs. On each wing, the first arc begins at the child's hand and the last one terminates at his feet.

GOBLIN: *Helmet with large, flat, broad ears that stand out from the head. These should be stuffed with cotton so that when the child faces the audience the ears stand out prominently in silhouette. Long stockings to hips. Belted tunic.*

NOTE: *The shadow-screen may be made by running a window-pole through the hem of a narrow sheet and supporting the pole so that the sheet just reaches the floor. The stage curtain should be opened only far enough to show a five-foot width of sheet, or folding screens should be placed so that the sheet appears to be five feet wide. Behind the sheet and some distance from it, there should be placed a large electric light about two feet above the floor level. This must be arranged so that the light can be turned on and off without casting a shadow on the screen.*

The characters stand, one at a time, between this electric light and the sheet. A little experimentation

will enable the teacher to determine the best placement of light and child, so that a full-figure silhouette will be thrown upon the shadow-screen.

The children who recite the verses stand in front of and beside the shadow-screen. If desired, one child may recite or read all the verses. The costumed characters appear, one by one, and stand immovable and silent during the recitation of the lines that apply to each. The lights behind the screen are turned out to permit the change of characters behind the screen. The assembly hall should be darkened throughout the performance.

Before the curtains open, the WITCH takes her place behind the shadow-screen, profile to the audience. She appears to be sitting on a broomstick which slants downward at a 45 degree angle. The upper end of the broomstick is held in her hand. The other end rests on the floor, behind her. There is no light behind the shadow-screen when the first child begins to speak. The curtains are closed.

FIRST CHILD.

We have made a shadow-show
To tell of Halloween.
If you will follow closely,
There's much that can be seen.

First, we'll draw the curtain,

[*Curtains open.*]

And then turn on the light.

[*Light behind shadow-screen is turned on.*]

Here we see an old, old witch
Who flies abroad all night.

She sits astride her broomstick;
Her hat is black and tall.
Around about her shoulders
She wears an old black shawl.

[*Light behind screen is turned off. While the next stanza is spoken, the CAT takes his place behind the screen. He stands on all fours, profile to the audience, tail arched over body, and head turned so that both ears show.*]

Now the witch has vanished;
No more can she be seen.
She's flown into the darkness;
She'll come on Halloween.

[*Light behind screen is turned on.*]

SECOND CHILD.

Next we see a cat so black
With tail that's very long.

Each of his four little feet
Have claws both sharp and strong.

[Light behind screen is turned off. While the next stanza is being spoken before the curtain, the CHILD with the jack-o'-lantern takes her place behind the shadow-screen, profile to the audience. She holds the jack-o'-lantern silhouette in front of her so that the face of the lantern shows prominently on the screen.]

Black cats belong to Halloween.
They have for many a year,
As anyone will tell you.
That's why we showed them here.
[Light behind screen is turned on.]

THIRD CHILD.

Next, we see a jack-o'-lantern
Carried by a child.
The eyes are large and shining.
I like the way he smiled.

[Light behind screen is turned off. While the next stanza is being spoken before the curtain, the BAT takes his place behind the shadow-screen. He holds his arms sideways at shoulder height, elbows slightly bent, and forearms hanging down at a slight angle, to show wings wide-spread in silhouette as he faces audience. His feet must be close together.]

They made him from a pumpkin,
Big, and fat, and yellow.
They carved him with a grinning face.
He is a jolly fellow.

[Light behind screen is turned on.]

FOURTH CHILD.

Here's a bat with wings so wide.
He flies across the moon.
Perhaps you'll see him Halloween.
You know, it's coming soon.

[Light behind screen is turned off. While the next stanza is being spoken, the GOBLIN takes his place behind the screen. He faces the audience, feet spread, arms akimbo.]

Bats come out on Halloween;
They are the weirdest things.
They have small furry bodies
And hooks upon their wings.

[Light behind screen is turned on.]

FIFTH CHILD.

Now we see a goblin small.
His ears are flat and wide.
He likes to play a merry prank,
And then he runs to hide.

Goblins are such merry folk;
It must be fun to be one.
That's why, in this, our shadow-show,
We arranged for you to see one.

[*Light behind screen is turned off.*]

FIRST CHILD.

This concludes our shadow-show
We've thrown upon the screen.
And now we wish for each of you
A happy Halloween.

CURTAIN

SCARECROW DANCE

CHARACTERS

TWO SCARECROWS

COSTUMES

SCARECROWS: *Any old clothes, much too large. The shoulders of the coats hang down. The sleeves are much too long. Large straw hats, with frayed edges. Straw sticking out of hats and pockets.*

MUSIC: "Irish Washerwoman," or *any gay tune.*

DANCE ROUTINE: Scarecrows enter from opposite sides. Step-hop on left foot. Step-hop on right foot. Arms are extended awkwardly. Turn right and left at will.

Scarecrows bump into each other, and then bow low in exaggerated apology. Each proceeds with his own dancing.

One trips over his own feet and falls to floor. He looks at audience, with his head on left hand, and his left elbow on floor. Picks his teeth with a straw. He taps fingers of right hand on floor, and looks disgusted.

Second Scarecrow falls over the first. Both lie on the floor a moment.

Both rise and dance, brushing off imaginary dust and picking off imaginary lint.

FINALE: They dance toward exits, one right and one left. They lift hats to audience, and grin widely.

NOTE: *All motions and acting should be humorous. Much of the success of a dance of this kind depends on the capabilities of the performers.*

JACK-O'-LANTERN RHYTHMS

CHARACTERS

TEN GIRLS

COSTUMES

PUMPKINS: *White, full-skirted dresses. Pin a pumpkin blossom spray from right shoulder to left side at*

waist line. The large floppy leaves and blossoms for the vine spray are easily made of crepe paper.

For the jack-o'-lantern mask, take a strip of orange crepe paper, gather across top and bottom, draw up tight and tie at top. Fasten some green leaves and a green cardboard stem in center. Cut out a stiff paper jack-o'-lantern face and fasten inside at front; then cut out the features in the crepe paper. Paste jagged white paper teeth in mouth. This can then be slipped on over the girl's head and the drawstring drawn up and tied at back of neck.

MUSIC: A lively march

MOVEMENT 1. Girls march in, five from each side of stage, forming line across back of stage.

5-4-3-2-1 1-2-3-4-5

Catch hold of hands—hold them shoulder high. March to front. Drop hands. Spread skirts, and bow to audience. Catch hands as before. March backward to original position.

MOVEMENT 2. Break ranks in center in couples, number ones leading up center forming an aisle. When couple number one reaches front, all stop, face each other, spread skirts, and bow to each other. Couples face forward. Catch hands as before. March backward eight steps. Forward eight steps, curtsy, face front, march.

MOVEMENT 3. Couples divide to left and right, number ones leading. As couple number five reaches center front and couple number one center back, all catch hands, forming circle.

MOVEMENT 4. Circle three times. Reverse and circle three times.

MOVEMENT 5. Close circle in, partners catch hands forming a wheel. Circle three times, reverse and circle three times. Fall back into large circle.

MOVEMENT 6. Skip around circle three times. When couple number one reaches center front, break circle and lines skip right and left up sides and across back of stage, passing each other. Then march up sides to front, forming two lines across front.

5-4-3-2-1 1-2-3-4-5

MOVEMENT 7. Front line sways to right. At same time back line sways to left. Repeat eight times. Lines reverse movement.

MOVEMENT 8. Lines march right and left up sides, form line across back of stage. March abreast to front, forming one line across front. They mark time in place, curtsy, and throw kisses to audience. Then five at right face right exit, five at left face left exit, and all march off stage.

HAPPY HALLOWEENIGANS

TIME OF PLAYING: *About ten minutes*

CHARACTERS

SKELETON, *a tall, thin boy*

THREE GHOSTS

SCARECROW

RHYTHM BAND PLAYERS, *off stage*

COSTUMES

SKELETON: *Suit of black tights with skeleton painted on it in white. Skeleton mask.*GHOSTS: *Draped in sheets. Faces powdered a dead white.*SCARECROW: *Ragged clothes; battered old hat; wisps of straw sticking out at neck, cuffs, buttonholes.*SCENE: *Stage decorated with cornstalks, pumpkins, and autumn leaves is in semi-darkness. Stage is empty when curtain rises, but Chinese wood blocks are heard off stage beating this rhythm:*

Rat-tat, rat-tat, and rat-tat-tat.

Rat-tat-tattle-tee-tat-tat-tat.

The action of this novelty moves in this rhythm as one after another the rhythm band instruments take it up. Enter SKELETON.

SKELETON [*chanting in time with Chinese wood blocks*].

One night a year I do appear.
Listen, children, and you shall hear
My arms so lean, and my legs so long,
Gayly clattering out a song.

[SKELETON *dances. A polka, a two-step preceded by a short hop, can be danced to this rhythm. As the SKELETON finishes his dance and retires to one side of stage, the triangles join the wood blocks in beating out the rhythm. Enter, THREE GHOSTS.*]

THREE GHOSTS.

Oh, we are Ghosts, and we repeat,
We are nothing from head to feet,
But watch us dance beneath the moon,
Keeping time to a rhythm tune.

[GHOSTS *dance. As they finish their dance and retire to the side of the stage, the tambourines join the wood blocks and the triangles in beating out the rhythm. Enter SCARECROW.*]

SCARECROW.

Oh, here I come. Whoops! There I go.
Where my knees are I never know.
For one goes east, and one goes west.
Then they snuggle beneath my vest.

[SCARECROW dances. He is a loose-jointed fellow whose knees seem to fail him from time to time. Two of the GHOSTS come forward to hold up SCARECROW by locking arms with him. The three of them glide twice to the right and twice to the left, and repeat. All available rhythm band instruments take up the rhythm. SKELETON and the other GHOST lock arms with the three dancers. ALL glide twice to the right and to the left, and repeat. Then in single file, they polka off the stage.]

CURTAIN

HALLOWEEN IN THE BAG

In the art period on the day of Halloween, give each member of the class a brown paper bag that is big enough to fit over his head. Have each child put the bag over his head to find the approximate position for the eyes, nose, and mouth. Then have him take it off and, at a signal, start designing and cutting out a jack-o'-lantern face.

This gives children an excellent chance for creative expression. A prize may be awarded for the best jack-o'-lantern.

If paper bags are not available, jack-o'-lantern faces can be cut in the smooth surfaces of apples in the same competitive manner.

VERSE CHOIR

Verse choir selections are very effective for school entertainments and very desirable, since an entire class can participate in their rendition. The timid child feels confident reciting with others, and the extremely forward child learns to co-operate with a group.

Children enjoy reciting together, and with practice a group becomes very proficient. The verse choir knows no limitations. The country schoolroom has the same opportunity for this type of expression as does the city school.

There are many arrangements used in verse choir work but with children the following serves best. Place the group in a semicircle with the shoulders touching. The high voices are on the left, medium voices in the center, and low on the right. However, teachers working with children whose voices have little shading need not bother with the various divisions. The boys can take the low tones, the girls the high, and either group the medium. Often, the selection will call for Choir I and Choir II. In this case, the girls take one choir and the boys the other.

Any teacher with a love of verse can develop a choir that will afford real enjoyment for the children and the audience.

With a little practice, the members of a verse choir can learn to speak in perfect unison.

A MOTLEY TROUPE

*Verse Choir*CHOIR I: *Boys*CHOIR II: *Girls*CHOIR I. [*Gruff tone.*]

Richard and Thomas, David and Dan,
Halloween costumes now are the plan,
Pirates and gypsies, scarecrows and tramps,
Beggars and hobos, tattered old scamps!

ALL. [*Faster tempo.*]

Hurry up!
Scurry up!
Halloween's coming!

CHOIR II.

Betty and Helen, Sally and Nan,
Dress as a witch or a Raggedy Ann,
Lady of fashion or Indian maid.
Prowl through the darkness. Who is afraid?

ALL.

Hurry up!
Scurry up!
Halloween's coming!

CHOIR II.

Witches, appear in your black, trailing robes.

CHOIR I.

Pirates, wear carrings from old treasure troves.

ALL. [*Whisper.*]

Ghosts, carry chains that go clankety-clank.
Show whitened faces all staring and blank.

Hurry up!
Scurry up!
Halloween prank.

CHOIR I.

Scarecrows with hats that are battered and torn,
Hobos with clothes that are ragged and worn.

CHOIR II.

Gypsies with skirts that are swirling and many;
We'll tell your fortune, if you have a penny.

ALL. [*Whisper.*]

Watch for us!
Watch for us!
Halloween's funny.

ALL.

We'll be a troupe that's out looking for fun;
We'll be accused of the mischief that's done.

So, dressed in our costumes, fantastic and queer,
We'll range the town over, both distant and near.

[*Louder.*]

Hurry up!
Hurry up!
Halloween's here!

IT'S JUST HALLOWEEN

Verse Choir

CHOIR I. Weird-looking creatures,
 Can always be seen.

ENTIRE CHORUS. Don't be afraid for
 It's just Halloween.

CHOIR II. Hundreds of specters,
 With goblins between.

ENTIRE CHORUS. Don't be afraid for
 It's just Halloween.

CHOIR I. Crackling bonfires
 Light up the weird scene.

ENTIRE CHORUS. Don't be afraid for
 It's just Halloween.

THE WITCH AND HER CAT

VERSE CHOIR

CHOIR I. On a ragged old broom
 Rides a big, black cat;
 [*Draw out this line.*]

CHOIR II. Behind sits a witch
 With a tall, black hat.
 [*Draw out this line.*]

LOW SOLO. Her feet are big,
MEDIUM SOLO. Her shoes point high
HIGH SOLO. As she rides past the moon
ENTIRE CHORUS. In the midnight sky [*whisper*].

LOW SOLO. Her nose is long,
MEDIUM SOLO. Her chin points out
HIGH SOLO. As she whips the wind
ENTIRE CHORUS. And flies about.

LOW SOLO. If you look sharp
MEDIUM SOLO. On Halloween,
HIGH SOLO. You might see, too,
ENTIRE CHORUS. This witch I've seen.

ENTIRE CHORUS. And you might see there

ENTIRE CHORUS. The cat that flies

HIGH SOLO. Along with the witch

ENTIRE CHORUS. Through the Halloween skies.

IT'S OLD HALLOWEEN

Tune: "The Campbells Are Coming"

It's Old Halloween, hurrah! hurrah!

It's Old Halloween, hurrah! hurrah!

It's Old Halloween, when spooks are seen,
And skeletons rattle, their bones picked clean.

It's time for merriment, fun, and cheer,
For down the street come the creatures queer;
The goblins, witches, and ghosts are here,
This jolliest day of all the year.

[As children march off stage, they repeat the first verse. The music should grow softer and softer, dying out entirely as they disappear.]

OLD HALLOWEEN

Tune: "Three Blind Mice"

Old Halloween, Old Halloween.
Oh, what a day! Oh, what a day!
You'll see strange creatures upon the street;
A ghost or goblin or witch you'll greet;
There's just no telling what you may meet
On Old Halloween, Old Halloween.

Old Halloween, Old Halloween.
Oh, what a day! Oh, what a day!
A time that every child knows about;
You'll hear young voices gayly shout;
There's lots of fun to be had, no doubt,
On Old Halloween, Old Halloween.

Old Halloween, Old Halloween.
Oh, what a day! Oh, what a day!
We'll play some games and a joke or two,
But trick or treating we will not do,
Because we know it's not fair to you
On Old Halloween, Old Halloween.

HALLOWEEN SONG

Tune, "Smile Awhile"

There's a day in the fall and we love it.
The children rejoice every year.
It's then we unite and gather at night
To plan and have times of good cheer.

CHORUS:

Halloween, we welcome you with joy.
Then there's fun for every girl and boy;
Goblins, witches stealing through the street,
Watch! The blackest cat you're sure to meet;
Ghosts, all white are walking in the lane;
Ticktacks, too, are on your window pane;
So be careful, look, and listen too,
It's spooky Halloween.

There are parties and games. We're invited
To bob for the apples so deep,
Then in some dark room search 'round in the gloom
While through us the shivers will creep.

CHORUS:

HALLOWEEN

A program followed by a ghost party or a ghost social is an excellent way to provide entertainment for the community and at the same time add to the funds and welfare of the school or organization.

If possible, a stage program should be arranged for the first part of the evening's entertainment.

The last number on the program should be a ghost dance. This should be given by the older children dressed as ghosts. Any figure may be used in the dance. The music, however, must be weird and ghostlike and the dancing must be in character.

The guests should be greeted by a ghost or by several ghosts. If an entertainment is not desired, games, contests, fortune telling, riddles, jokes, stories, and stunts in which all may participate are excellent means of entertainment.

For the social part of the evening, the women bring boxes, as for a box social. Each also brings a sheet. When the boxes are to be sold, the women, attired as ghosts in the draped sheets, line up in front of the audience, and the auctioneer, dressed as a witch, calls for bids on the ghosts, not the boxes. At the conclusion of the auction, the purchasers come forward and claim the "ghosts" they have bought.

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